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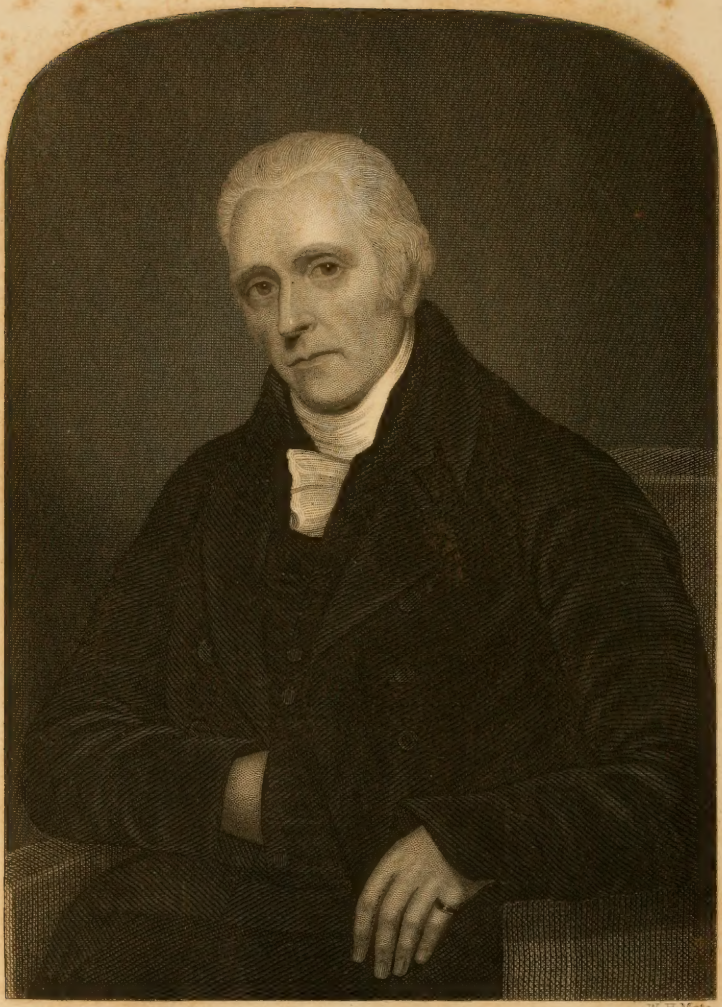

W. H. Mote

Yours very affectionately
Edw.d Williams

THE WORKS

OF THE

REV. EDWARD WILLIAMS, D.D.

EDITED BY

EVAN DAVIES.

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AN ESSAY

ON THE

EQUITY OF DIVINE GOVERNMENT AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF DIVINE GRACE.

AND

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ARMINIAN SYSTEM.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

A BRIEF MEMOIR OF DR WILLIAMS.

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MEMOIR OF DR WILLIAMS.

Dr Williams was born on the 14th of November 1750, at Glanclyd, a farm occupied by his ancestors for about a century and a half, near Denbigh, North Wales. At five years of age, he was sent to school, taught by a female who was then instructing grandchildren of her former pupils! At nine, he was sent to another school, but whose master preferred drinking companies to the care of his scholars, or even his own sons. At eleven, he was sent to a school at the cathedral town of St Asaph, to prepare for one of the universities, in order to become a clergyman of the Establishment. The irreligion of the place, however, was to him unendurable, and on that account he withdrew. So that purpose was frustrated. At sixteen, he was placed at a grammar school at Caerwys, to qualify him for the law. That profession presented no attraction to him. In his seventeenth year, he was taken home to assist his father in the business of farming and grazing. In his twentieth year, he was placed with a clergyman for private instruction, with a view—a second effort—to induce him to enter the ministry of the Establishment. The absence of everything that deserved the name of religion in the family and in the habits of this gentleman, who recommended to him Dean Swift's "Tale of a Tub" in preference to Elisha Cole on "Divine Sovereignty," with other circumstances, led him again to abandon that project. In his twenty-first year, he became a member of the Independent church at Denbigh, and entered the Academy then at Abergavenny,

where Dr Benjamin Davies—afterwards of Homerton College, London—was divinity tutor. In his twenty-fifth year he settled as pastor of the Independent church at Ross, in Herefordshire. In his twenty-seventh year he removed to Oswestry. When thirty-one, he became tutor of the Academy in which he was educated, —then removed from Abergavenny to Oswestry, in order to secure his services. Ten years afterwards, he accepted the pastorate of the church at Carr's Lane, Birmingham. When he was forty-five, he became the Resident and Theological Tutor of Rotherham College, and pastor of the Congregational church at Masborough. In his sixty-third year, he died in peace, and was buried under the pulpit in the sanctuary where he ministered for eighteen years with great prosperity, and where the estimation in which he was deservedly held was of the highest and the most hallowing order.

A few lines only suffice for the outline of his consecrated life ; but within that outline, we have a period of above forty years at least, filled up with unremitting thought on the deepest themes of theology and moral philosophy, with extensive authorship, with ministerial work, and with professorial occupation. In each department of his life's work, his devout, dignified Christian deportment, combined with his profound mental powers, created streams of influence which proved, by the lamentation for his death, to have been deep and wide, powerful and salutary, far beyond his own section of the Church. He lived in a period of great events, and hence of great men. It was a period great in politics, great in science, great in literature, great in religion, great in earnest thinking, great in enormities, and great in excellences. In his own sphere, Dr Williams contributed largely to what was good in that greatness. To the interval between 1750 and 1815, the future nations of the world, and especially those of Europe, will look back as to one which can supply them with some of the most important lessons which history can teach ; and to it the Church also, in all time to come, will refer with the deepest possible interest. It was the birth-period of Bible, missionary, and other institutions,—institutions that are now changing the spiritual, and, indeed, the material condition of many nations and distant regions,—a period every jot

and tittle of whose Christian history, and the memory and character of every agent who contributed any mite to that history, it is important for the Church to preserve and to set forth. But to return to

DR WILLIAMS'S EARLY LIFE.

During his childhood there was not a family in the parish in which he was brought up where domestic worship was observed, —the minister of the parish himself not an exception; nor was there at the time, in the six counties of North Wales, three clergymen who preached the gospel, and so lived as to exhibit its power and purity in their own lives. Such was the dense spiritual darkness of that heavy night then brooding over the north of the Principality. Fearfully dreary as this period was, yet some rays of Divine light seem to have penetrated the thick gloom, and reached the heart of this great man when he was a child only between three and four years old. This cheering fact, in God's exercises of mercy, was discovered by his anguish at the death of his brother, an infant a year old. When he knew that the babe was gone, he retired to a solitary place, the scenery of which was to the last day of his life distinctly painted in his memory, wept bitterly, and was much concerned to know whether he was happy in a separate state. At length he was comforted with the persuasion that he was gone to the place of the happy, where he longed to be—with him. The next circumstance illustrative of his susceptibility on spiritual things, was the fact that he was led, through the bad example of servants or others, apparently to take the name of God in vain. Next to the death of his brother, it was the first thing he could remember as giving him spiritual concern. On this occasion, he again betook himself to a place apart from every observer, and, under the power of conviction, bursting into tears, continued weeping till discovered by one of the family; and was then a long time inconsolable, accusing himself of having taken "the name in vain," thus expressing it for fear of repeating the transgression. This instance he afterwards distinctly marked as the first in which he ever mourned for sin, but he regarded the

concern as having been but transient. At another time, being much provoked by a play-fellow, he uttered an oath, "which," says he, "wounded my conscience as if a dagger had pierced my heart." These are the only instances which he could ever recollect of open transgression, so graciously was he kept from the grosser defilements of immorality. Looking back on the circumstances now detailed at a late period of his life, he observes,—"I am not above reflecting on these first convictions, for, O my soul, the hand of God was in them! and 'who hath despised the day of small things?'"

When only nine years of age, he had an attack of small-pox, and for two-and-twenty days his eyes were sealed up, and all hope of recovery was precluded by the severity of the disease. Trouble of mind was added to bodily pain; his conscience was tender. During that long confinement, not only his more settled thoughts, but the wanderings of delirium, indicated great uneasiness of mind from a sense of guilt, the fear of death, and the displeasure of God. These alarms were so violent, that the recollection of them was at times through the rest of his life most vivid. For two years afterwards, he was placed in circumstances most unfavourable to the preservation of any religious impressions made on his mind by the events already referred to, and in fact he lost much of the concern he had felt as to the state of his soul; "and yet," he says, "I well remember one night in particular in which I was extremely affected with the thought of dying, and the possibility of being eternally separated from my nearest relatives. While in bed I wept much, and for the first time felt great anguish of spirit for the apprehended state of my living associates, especially my nearest and dearest relatives; which deep sorrow was followed by some small degree of hope." "This can scarcely," observes Mr Gilbert, "be regarded as any other than the power of God. What earthly principle or common instinct of human nature could move a youth, amidst" godless companions and drunken teachers,—for such were his at this time,—"to pass hours of the night in penitence, 'watering his couch with his tears?'" The answer is at hand,—it was no earthly power or

natural instinct; it was God's grace. Such, in after life, was Dr Williams's own views on the subject, as the following statement will prove:—

"On my return home in 1763" from St Asaph, whither he was sent, and where he remained for two years,—"when I had leisure to reflect, I found myself much altered for the worse. I had omitted prayer with little remorse, and my mind was injured by bad example. I observed that I, as I grew in stature and years, grew also in folly and sin; and so deep was the impression, that the bare recollection of this period now fills me with confusion, and grieves my heart; therefore God, who never left Himself without witness in my breast, took another method with me. Gentle admonitions, whispers of conscience, and providential deliverances, were in a great measure unavailable. Now a scourge of a nature very different from anything I had before experienced, was prepared, and which I may introduce, in the words of Eliphaz, with as much propriety of application, perhaps, as any man living:—'Now a thing was secretly brought unto me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.'

"What I saw in my sleep was so ghastly and terrible as to cause me to cry and shriek out in the dead of night, to the disturbance of the family. It was equally out of the power of pencil to delineate, and of pen to describe it. I thought I was in outer darkness, surrounded by fiends, and enduring the pangs of the worm that never dieth. So insupportable was my anguish, that, for a very considerable time afterwards, I dreaded the hour of rest as the hour of torment. Indeed, it produced a manifest change in my countenance and deportment, though I was still unapprised of its design and end. My conscience was alarmed, and I was unhappy; but my uneasiness, however, arose more from a conviction of defect than of positive crime. I felt that my mind and its affections were irregular,—that I was naturally unclean; and from this condition I despaired of being ever released. After some months, the effect which might naturally be expected to

result from this visitation began to wear off, and I returned to my former habits; but now I was tried in a different manner, by a visitation as delightful as the other was terrific.

"This, indeed, was the exact reverse of the former, both as to place, company, enjoyment, and consciousness. The recollection gives a more affecting, and, I think, a truer idea of heaven than anything I ever met with. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the glory.' The difficulties I had experienced before seemed only to heighten my joy and thankfulness; and when I awoke, I was as much grieved at the thought of returning to the realities of life, as I was before comforted to think that what I had beheld was but a dream."

"Of these visions," says Mr Gilbert, "different persons will form judgments varying from each other according to their principles or prejudices. Many are forward in expressing a kind of vulgar contempt of such things, — a contempt copied without thought from the profane, and uttered by the ignorant with an affectation of superior strength of mind. One thing is certain, that those who have been most ready to vilify all attention to such impressions on the imagination, have generally been persons of feeble powers of understanding; while, on the other hand, not a few, who have professedly been the subjects of them, have been men of undoubted strength of intellect, and remarkable for correctness of judgment. Every one who has had an opportunity of intercourse with the late Dr Williams, will admit that he was not a person whom he would suspect of being liable to extravagances of fancy. He was accustomed to be severely exact in his estimation of evidence, and his taste was susceptible only of truth and goodness. Yet he says—'In my coolest and most thoughtful moments, I can ascribe the dreams to nothing less than the distinguishing goodness of God warning me and calling me to Himself, like an indulgent father, employing sometimes frowns, and sometimes smiles, to seduce his untoward child to filial obedience.' The gracious Power that was thus operating upon his heart, was at the same time providing the means, though he knew it not, by

which he was to be introduced into the liberty wherewith Christ makes His disciples free, the means of introduction to the visible Church, and the means of his future usefulness."

At this time the Calvinistic Methodists were raised up by God in South Wales to do a mighty work in the Principality. They were in the habit of making excursions into the North in order to bring the light of the gospel into these dark regions. Dr Williams had heard of them only in the reproaches cast upon them. The gracious work that God had been carrying on in his heart, as if without any external means whatever, led him to suspect that these people everywhere spoken against knew more of salvation than did their calumniators. He longed to know them. The first preacher he heard among them was the Rev. Daniel Rowland of Llangeitho, a sequestered rural parish in Cardiganshire,—a name as well known in Wales as the Rev. G. Whitefield in England. He understood but little of his discourse, only admired his ability and pathetic manner. After this he heard occasional sermons from ministers in that connexion; but "the first time my heart was laid open by deep conviction was in a despicable barn, under the discourse of a lay preacher,—his name is not known, but it is recorded on high,—when he exposed the wickedness of the human heart, and traced the workings of vain thoughts, which lodge there as in an unclean cage, especially the vain thoughts and expectations of men to secure salvation and happiness otherwise than by God's appointment. Then he directed us to the fountain of mercy and the Saviour's merits, as the appointed method by which we are cleansed. Now my soul was alarmed and melted. Tears flowed in streams, and *my repentings were kindled together*. The word was indeed 'a two-edged sword, quick and powerful, that divideth asunder the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' Now I knew, because it was irresistibly felt, that God's plain and pure word was 'as fire, and as a hammer which breaketh the rock in pieces.' Oh the anguish of my mind! Perhaps I may say, that never a poor sinner, when hearing an inspired apostle, was much more affected than I was. The King's

arrows did indeed stick fast in the heart of His enemy, whereby that enemy fell at His feet crying for mercy.

"I had gone that evening unknown to my friends, and their fear of my associating with that people awakened their solicitude and resentment. Accordingly they left strict orders with the servants not to let me in, though a wet, cold night. I made my bed in straw, and took shelter in an out-house; but my clothes being wet, I was stiffened with cold by the morning. Sleep was far from my eyes, and sorrow filled my soul, with only a secret hope to comfort me, that God would not leave me always in that state. I dreaded the morning's interview, knowing my father's resentment to be great from the step he had taken. I had in my pocket Boston's treatise entitled 'The Crook in the Lot,' which I had procured the night before, and which, at the dawn of light, I perused, and learnt that every true Christian must suffer crosses. The storm was not greater than I expected, and at length blew over."

It appears, however, that this was not the only time when he felt the severity of his father's displeasure. His altered manners, and deep concern for his soul, became very conspicuous, and his parents regarded him as a ruined youth. Such was his attention to the Bible, religious books, and devotional duties, that they became apprehensive lest he should lose his reason. His mother wept over him, and shewed her solicitude by the most tender entreaties, but his father not unfrequently gave vent to more angry emotion. He suffered without murmuring, and, as far as he could, proved his obedience and dutiful submission.

Such trials, though distressing, were nevertheless mercifully alleviated. He reports:—"The religious people with whom I now associated manifested much affection towards me, and gave me to understand that they considered my company as an acquisition to their despised cause. Some of them were persons of spiritual standing, grave and circumspect; others, novices, full of zeal without discretion. These latter especially appeared extremely affected under the word, and even could not avoid expressing the warmth of their feelings by external signs of pleasure. While

singing, they sometimes clapped their hands and leaped for joy. This I could not do, and, for that reason, I considered myself deficient in my love to Christ, and was tempted to suspect the truth of my past experience of grace. Yet after leaving the congregation while on my way home, I often felt so full of joy, that it rose even to triumph, and I thought that I could go through fire and through water for Christ. But at length I was taught that though the passions are always moved, more or less, in turning to God, yet that there may be a great deal of agitation where real affection for His name is not found."

COMMENCEMENT OF HIS USEFULNESS AND MINISTERIAL EDUCATION.

Dr Williams was now a new creature in Christ Jesus, and avowed his change by uniting himself, more or less closely, with the Calvinistic Methodists. The same sanctified impulse that led him to seek out the calumniated Methodists induced him most likely to make the acquaintance of the Rev. Daniel Lloyd, the Independent minister of Denbigh; of whose church he became a member in his twentieth year, that is, in 1770. At this time he was deeply impressed by a consideration of the vileness of sin, and exceedingly humbled under a view of his fallen state, through inherent depravity and a consciousness of inward failure and guilt; and being deeply concerned about his own salvation, he became tenderly affected with pity and love towards others, and soon began, under the sanction of Mr Lloyd, to exhort his neighbours to flee from the wrath to come. This was the beginning of his activities. Mr Lloyd was fully satisfied with his young friend. Hence he recommended him to the Independent Academy at Abergavenny. His father withdrew his active opposition, and allowed him a comfortable support during the period he remained at the Academy. Now began a period of mental application—close, intense, and unremitting—which only ended with his life. While pursuing his academic course with a diligence which secured success, he maintained his warm, simple affection and spiritual

concern for his family and friends, and his ardent piety; while he also developed the peculiarity of his mind as it unfolded itself in after years. It will be obvious to every reader of his works, that he was not the man to take anything on trust, without personal examination. It is not to be wondered at if this tendency of mind should sometimes have led him astray. This excellency, not yet matured, will explain what is painful in the following letter of his divinity tutor, Dr Benjamin Davies:—

"I fear," he writes, "the information I am able to communicate, with the aid of a memory greatly impaired, will rather disappoint than gratify you. I must be silent as to dates, as I have preserved no notes or documents to which I can refer. Dr Williams received his first religious impressions under the ministry of the Calvinistic Methodists, who itinerated through the different parts of Wales. But previous to his coming to Abergavenny, he was admitted into connexion with a Dissenting church at Denbigh. His father, who was a respectable freeholder in Denbighshire, and a bigoted Churchman, was much offended with his new principles and connexions, and treated him with harshness and severity. He came to me with very satisfactory testimonials, and his father manifesting no disposition to support him during his studies, I was taking measures for procuring him the allowance granted to other students from the Independent Fund. When his father understood this, his mind revolted at the idea of his son's being indebted to a charitable institution for his education; and therefore granted him a decent allowance, during his continuance at the Academy. When he became my pupil, he had been initiated into Latin only, but, by close application, he acquired a competent knowledge, not only of that language, but of Greek and Hebrew, though it was not to be expected that he should, while with me, become a profound linguist; especially as, in connexion with languages and theology, our plan embraced logic, natural philosophy, astronomy, geometry, algebra, &c. None of these branches were neglected by him, but I am not able to ascertain which of them occupied his chief attention; though I conceive his time was chiefly devoted to languages and divinity. I am well assured, that he was not self-

indulgent with regard to sleep, though I do not imagine that he sat up late, but was rather an early riser. My recollection does not furnish me with much to say with regard to his talent as a disputant; only I may venture to say, his reasoning was not diffusive, but close and pertinent. When he commenced preaching, he appeared partial to the popular and declamatory mode adopted by the Methodist preachers, and made some essays to imitate their manner; but I clearly saw that his acceptance and usefulness would rather depend upon his being an instructive preacher, addressing himself to the understanding more than to the passions of his hearers. The temporary alteration which took place in his religious sentiments was occasioned by the sermons and conversation of a minister in Herefordshire, who frequently visited Abergavenny. He and I for years cultivated a close and intimate friendship, but his altered views in religion created me no small trouble, and ultimately contributed to my removal. At one time he verged towards Arminianism, then became a rigid Calvinist, soon afterwards he was a Hutchinsonian, and purchased all Hutchinson's works. In a short time he imbibed a portion of Sandemanianism, but soon passed into Mysticism, maintaining the doctrine of a spiritual light pervading the minds of all mankind, and, as well as I could understand him, asserting universal salvation. It was in this last stage that the mind of my young pupil was unhinged by him. He often grieved me by hints suggested at our theological lectures, and it was evident he regarded my knowledge in divinity as deficient, if not contemptible, when compared with his new instructor. But I bore it patiently, in the hope that his piety would rectify his mistakes. Nor was I disappointed. For being permitted to supply a congregation at Bromyard, in Herefordshire, for one Sabbath, he was about a day or two longer than I expected. But I shall never forget what an open and pleasant countenance he discovered on his return. He apologised for his absence, by informing me that he had made a visit to his friend, the minister above mentioned. He had observed that every succeeding interview with him had brought out some new principles which he had not communicated before; he therefore

wished to know where he was at last to stop and rest. His friend replied, 'He could not say, but that he must follow where the light led him.' This convinced the pious youth that he had followed a dangerous guide, and that it would be safer for him to return and study his Bible. From that time his regard and deference to his tutor were revived. This cloud was not of long continuance, at the utmost but for a few months, if so long; and, while it lasted, there did not appear any signs of levity, but there seemed to be more of a speculative, and less of a spiritual temper than before. I have thus attempted an answer to your inquiries, but I am sensible of its imperfection, and fear it will rather disappoint than gratify you. But though I can contribute so little to embalm the memory of Dr Williams, I rejoice that his very useful labours and valuable publications constitute a durable monument to his honour, and to the praise of that grace which rendered him what he was."

"In this communication," observes Mr Gilbert, "the tutor and the pupil appear alike lovely. The meekness, prudence, patience, and hope of the one are met and rewarded by the industry, piety, corrected ardour, discernment, and returning duty of the other. It is pleasant to see a venerable man, full of years and of wisdom, seeking to step into the shade of one who was first guided by his hand into the path of knowledge, who owed to him a return to it after temporary wandering, and who derived from him the very principles of his future distinction. There is a freshness and life in the expressions employed by this excellent man which shew that he had learned the difficult lesson of esteeming another better than himself,—that he felt a genuine and warm admiration of a mind which he had known in its first rudeness, the scanty compass of whose attainments he had so often measured, which had stood in his presence as a pigmy before one of the Anakim. With what ardour and interest of attention does he look through the dim distance of forty years, and dwell upon the virtues and expanding promise of his pupil's excellence and future superiority! Surely the humility of a matured Christian has a glory in it surpassing far the loftiness of pride, and the show of vanity,—a grace to be admired by taste, as well as a virtue to be cultivated by duty. In

this portrait, thus ably and affectionately drawn, we are at no loss to discern the rudiments of what was to be. We see force of principle, vigour of resolution, devotedness, power of mind and piety, so united as to constitute a solid and suitable basement for the erection which it was hereafter to support."

PASTORAL SETTLEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE.

Dr Williams passed through his academic *curriculum* with great credit, for he had laid well the foundation of every department of Christian service, in which he afterwards shone with so much brightness. In the year 1775, he began his career as a settled Christian minister and pastor, at Ross, a small town in Herefordshire. Happily we have the means of ascertaining the kind of life he led in this retired spot. He kept a diary, illustrative of the diversified, apparently hastily-fluctuating movements of an excursive and restless mind. It differs widely from customary papers of this kind, as containing not an orderly selection of thoughts upon similar or related topics, but a free mixture of them in their natural liberty just as they are wont to arise. The following extracts will illustrate the nature and depth of his piety, the extent of his reading, and the class of subjects he investigated:—

"Let us examine, watch, and inspect our own hearts, for we ourselves are our greatest flatterers. Oh the tranquillity, the liberty, the greatness of that mind which is a spy upon itself, and the private censor of its own manners!"

"The more I examine, the more traces I discover of true oratory in Whitefield. The whole machinery of eloquence is displayed in every sermon. Proving, painting, and moving the passions, the essentials of this sacred art, are here struck off by a happy negligence; and what others attempt by elaborate artifice, he achieves by a sublime spirit of religion."

He was ordained to the pastoral office on the 27th of March 1776, and these are his reflections as recorded in his diary on that solemn occasion:—

"The solemnities of this day were profitable to many. With me, it was a sweet as well as a solemn season. I trust my soul was warmly engaged in the work; but when I consider its awfulness and importance, I tremble! A messenger of the King of kings to treat with immortal souls! O thou eternal Truth! unite me to Thyself, and conduct my steady feet through every intricate path. O thou eternal Wisdom! sit regent in my soul; instruct, direct, and guide me; for Thou alone canst give me skill and grant success. Lord! here I am, passive clay in Thy hands. Do with me, do by me, as it pleaseth Thee."

"I am transported with Fénelon's sublimity. He seems to outshine all others without being envied. Nay, who can forbear loving him? In reading him, not only is he lost, but I lose myself."

"Found my mind calm, passions hushed, and ideas clear; but my affection for my approaching work not sufficiently warm."

"Left Ledbury for Worcester. The east and west prospects of the hills (Malvern) are most delightful, and the orchards in full bloom make a beautiful variety. It is a picture that the most skilful artist could but faintly imitate; the design noble and simple, seemingly negligent, yet perfectly exact. O thou wonderful artist, thou inimitable painter, if Thy works thus draw attention, and extort silent admiration and love, who would not attend to and admire and love Thyself, the source of all beauty, the centre of all perfection!"

The following letter to his parents is not an extract from his diary, but it deserves a prominent place on account of its faithfulness, and the ardent love it discloses. And it is the more worthy of note, because it was addressed by a son to a stern High-Churchman, destitute of spiritual personal piety, and possessing much contempt for all Dissenters. It is dated October 3, 1776:—

"Dear and honoured Parents,—It is but lately I came home from my journey. I enjoy, through mercy, a good share of health, to which my travelling did not a little contribute. Oh the greatness and number of God's tender mercies! Goodness and mercy have followed me all my days. 'O my soul, bless the Lord; and

all that is within me, praise His holy name!' Did we know more of God and Jesus Christ, we should be more full of holy fear, and love, and gratitude. This day six years I entered upon studies with a professed design for the ministry,—when you and I, dear father, went to Derwen to Mr E. Every step of my life since that day I have reason to bless God for. I was blamed by some, and slighted by others, for proceeding as I did; but, blessed be God, it was His secret hand that led me all along. I may justly say with David, 'What was I that I should be brought hitherto?' But He had wise ends therein, some of which I have seen already; and the remainder, time will tell. I thirst and long after the conversion of men, and God, in some measure, gives me my desire.

"Oh that you and all my relatives did hunger and thirst after righteousness, and earnestly long for the new birth, till Christ is formed in you! This would fulfil my joy, and almost complete my happiness. That time when I was thought to be melancholy, or going beside myself, was the very time when the Spirit of God brought me as a prodigal to myself, broke my heart in godly repentance, and formed in me a resolution to *take up my cross and follow Him*. Oh, with what pleasure do I remember the time when I wrestled with God, poured forth strong cries and tears before Him, in the fields and in barns, for myself and for you! and if I thought it would be of any service, I would consume myself with weeping over my dear relatives. But alas! were I to weep to death, it would not do, till the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse from all sin.

"I received an affectionate letter from my sister Jane, from Chester, who informed me that you were then well. She has promising parts; I pray God, wherever her lot is cast, she may improve and employ them in His service. . . . With love and respect to all where due, I remain, your dutiful son,

"E. W."

On the 28th of July 1777, he married Miss Mary Llewellyn—a lady of highly respectable family, of singular amiableness of character, and of genuine piety.

REMOVAL FROM ROSS TO OSWESTRY, AND PROFESSORIAL OCCUPATION.

At the close of the year 1777, he removed from Ross to Oswestry, where he devoted himself to his various duties as pastor, tutor, and author with marvellous assiduity and energy. In illustration of his life and application in this new sphere, we will make a few more extracts from his diary:—

"How came Socrates to be esteemed the wisest of men by the oracle of Delphos? Was it because he knew the ignorance of men better than others?"

"What is the model of perfection in any kind of composition? Where to be found? What was the *standard of the ancients* whose writings we fully admire and imitate?"

"As I have entered on a new year, may I enter on a new course of holy living, forgetting those things which are behind, and pressing forward towards the mark of my high calling. O thou Father of mercies! pardon my past offences, and draw me to Thyself. O thou dear Immanuel, my blessed Lord and Master! teach me Thy will and pleasure. O thou Spirit of truth! enlighten and lead me into all truth, inspire me with a zeal which is according to knowledge, and a love which many waters cannot quench, nor floods drown. O thou holy Trinity! once more do I renew the dedication of myself to Thee. My soul and body, my studies and talents, my family and flock, do I now consecrate to God my Redeemer. Blest Jesus! let Thy grace be sufficient for me, and Thy strength be made perfect in my weakness.

"EDWARD WILLIAMS.

"This book is witness.

"This room is witness."

"Which is most valuable in pulpit compositions—perspicuity, or energy of style? Exclusive of the Scriptures, are Homer, Demosthenes, Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Longinus, and Chrysostom, among the ancients; Milton, Baxter, Howe, Charnock, Young,

and Whitefield among the moderns, the standards of sublimity, perspicuity, or energy of style? When we are engaged in any composition, would it not be of service to us to fix upon the most eminent pattern in that kind of writing, and, as it were, consult his judgment therein? Should not a Christian orator flash conviction by irresistible arguments and imagery, rather than amuse the imagination by fantastical allusions? Will not a happy genius, a lively imagination, warm passions, a due degree of knowledge and skill in the subject, a perpetual perusal of the writings of the best orators, and hearing the best speakers, do more to make an orator than all the rules of art in the world?"

"Are philosophers mistaken when they deny existence to modes, confining it to substances? Have we any account of writing before Moses? About what time, in what place, by whom was the use of characters invented? Does not the use or the want of writing greatly affect the manners of a people? Was the memory stronger when men were ignorant of writing?"

I can find room only for two extracts more. The one will indicate the range and nature of his reading and studies, and the other how he consecrated all to the service of his Divine Master:—

"May we not discover in Whitefield's discourses the traces of genuine eloquence? Is not the whole machinery of sacred oratory displayed in many of his sermons? If unity of design, simplicity of method, and perspicuity of expression, are the leading qualities of a perfect piece, do not his discourses possess merit? Are there any sermons in the English language capable of exciting the pious passions, of inspiring the soul with holy transport, of admitting warmth and energy of delivery, to the degree of his compositions? To me this servant of Jesus as far excels Demosthenes and Cicero, in unity, simplicity, energy, and pathos, as his cause was superior to theirs."

"For three months past I have attended chiefly to reading, the acquiring of knowledge, acquaintance with the world, men, and manners; and now, O Lord, teach me to number my days, that I may effectually apply my heart unto wisdom. Much time has been spent by thee, O my soul, in preparation, and in collecting

materials for a holy and useful life, and now shake off thy incumbrances, gird up thy strength, and apply to thy proper work."

Dr Williams's learning, erudition, and ability, soon became known to an extent little anticipated by him. Hence he was applied to on behalf of Lady Glenorchy to undertake the duties of educating four or five young men for the Christian ministry. Hardly were the arrangements on behalf of her ladyship completed, than he was applied to by Dr Davies, his former tutor at Abergavenny, then removed to Homerton, to become his successor at Abergavenny both in the Academy and the pastorate of the church. The invitation to the latter would of course depend on the church itself. The correspondence will be found at length in Mr Gilbert's Memoirs. I can here only observe that it is highly honourable to all concerned,—honourable to Dr Williams, as it shews his high moral principles and his disinterestedness,—honourable to Dr Davies, and the Fund Board, on behalf of whom Dr Davies made the application, who so highly appreciated his worth and adaptation for the work in which he was already indeed engaged in connexion with Lady Glenorchy, that they removed the Academy to Oswestry, in order to secure his services, as he could not see it his duty to leave North Wales. Here he spent fourteen years in incessant and various labours as pastor of the church, as tutor of the academy, and as an author. Here he abridged and published Maurice's "Social Religion Exemplified;" wrote his elaborate work on Baptism; issued various minor publications; abridged and published Dr Owen's "Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews;" and wrote most of his great work on the Equity of the Divine Government and Sovereignty of Divine Grace.

REMOVAL TO BIRMINGHAM, AND FINALLY TO ROTHERHAM.

These accumulated labours proved more than his constitution and health could bear. He was therefore under the necessity of seeking a removal. Now, moreover, he began to feel a strong desire to devote himself exclusively to the duties of the pastorate. The church at Carr's Lane, Birmingham, sought his services, and

in 1792 he removed thither. The knowledge of his worth and his influence was extending year by year. His correspondence, for instance, with American divines became extensive, and in the first year of his residence at Birmingham the University of Edinburgh conferred upon him their diploma of D.D.,—an honour which he neither sought nor expected. Active in the work of the Master, respected by all who knew him on account of his godly zeal, varied acquirements, and Christian humility, here he remained till the year 1795. He employed the press only to a limited extent while at Birmingham; yet what he did publish was important, and exerted a powerful influence in creating our missionary societies, home and foreign.

In July 1795, Dr Williams was called to mourn the loss of his excellent and affectionate wife, after the enjoyment of much domestic happiness for eighteen years. It was remarked by him, that that very day, and that hour of the day, when she was committed to the grave was precisely that distance of time from their marriage. By her Dr Williams had a family of nine children, five of whom preceded her to the house appointed for all living. In her he had a companion possessing piety—tinged, indeed, with a hue of gloom, the reasons of which were very obvious—second only to his own. She lies in St Paul's Churchyard, Birmingham, in a spot, the full view of which she had from her own chamber, where she felt her own dust would mingle with that of her youngest child, with whom she had been called to part the preceding January.

Dr Williams, for three years, at Birmingham, enjoyed comparative quietude, and, as the result, health had considerably improved. He was, therefore, induced, in 1795, to accept the Residency and Divinity tutorship of the then newly-established Academy at Rotherham. The Independent church at Masborough, a suburb of Rotherham, was at the same time without a pastor, and they cordially invited him to occupy the vacant pulpit. It is with this position that his name stands almost always associated. It was here he gained his chief renown, without seeking it, and his most extensive usefulness in the various lines of things he pursued in the service of his Lord.

"Dr Williams now found himself in desolate circumstances. With a youthful family around him, and at the head of a considerable establishment, which required a domestic as well as a literary superintendence, his cares and duties soon appeared too numerous and pressing to be borne in solitude. In addition to the yearnings of a heart accustomed to the enjoyments of endeared social intercourse, he felt himself urged by public considerations to seek a reparation of the loss which had been inflicted by the bereavement suffered just before his settlement in Yorkshire. By a favourable providence, he had been introduced to the acquaintance of a lady at Worcester, whose character, piety, prudence, and accomplishments, justly inspired him with confidence that she would, not only with honour to herself fill up the important station required in his family, but afford him, personally, the solace of sensible and sweet companionship. A more judicious choice, in the opinion of all who afterwards had the pleasure of knowing that lady, when engaged in the offices which she so well sustained and truly adorned, it is scarcely conceivable that he could have made. . . . A higher eulogium could not easily be passed on her, than that she was worthy of her happy lot in being the wife of so distinguished a man. Miss Yeomans was married to Dr Williams in the latter part of the year 1796, and survived him till 2d February 1823. She has left behind her a son, the only child she ever had, bearing the name of his father, Edward Williams,—a name, the bright associations bound up with which, it is fervently hoped, he may live rightly to appreciate." That life was, however, cut short by Him whose ways are just, right, wise, and good, at an early age.

"From a friendly correspondence which had been maintained with this lady may be introduced the following extracts, illustrative of the Doctor's habits of piety in his familiar thoughts and reflections:—

"'In judging of the line of duty, it is with me a maxim of great weight, that the decision be justified in the conscience by all supposable consequences. If we attend only to what is in itself right, consequences should be left wholly with the Supreme Dis-

poser. This will be a strong staff to support virtue in distress, as it has been the crowning joy of martyrdom itself. Guided by the light of this maxim, I have removed to this place, and undertaken a solemn charge: and be the consequences what they may, the step itself, I am persuaded, will never give me trouble, but rather pleasure.

"'The blessed triumph of your deceased friend was not unlike that of mine, in the face of the last enemy. True religion, we therein see, is not a mere name, an empty sound, but the most substantial reality. I trust the same grace that supported them will be present to our aid, when we most need it—at the hour which terminates our earthly career. The Lord, our God and Father, who gives us grace, will assuredly crown it with an unfading diadem—an eternal weight of glory.

"'Surely the grand machinery of Providence and grace has "a wheel within a wheel;" assuredly "all things work together for good to them that love God, who are called according to His purpose." Often, in my numerous trials, I have said, "Lord, Thou knowest the way that I take, and when Thou hast tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Yes, "God is the Lord, who hath shewed us light; bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar!"

"'Though at the moment it gave me some pain, yet the magnitude and composing sweetness of the subject which had occupied my meditations—God, as the supreme good and happiness of the soul—soon restored ease and tranquillity. How much do they lose,—how much have I myself lost, of solid happiness, while too neglectful of this blessed exercise of self-consecration to God, and resting in His embrace! Forgive, O God of love, all past wanderings, and secure to Thyself the absolute sway in my soul! Hereby shall enjoyments acquire their true relish, and hereby trials will be borne with dignity, at least with humble and calm resignation to sovereign appointment. At present, my friend, this adorable, exuberant fountain of delight, my Saviour-God, engages all my love of desire, in order to be happy; while that of benevolence and friendship, which aims to promote happiness in others, is not lessened, but refined.

"'My mind has been comfortable, particularly in meditating on these words, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." What a blessed, efficacious remedy against envying the prosperity of the wicked; and what adorable condescension, that the Eternal Majesty should propose Himself to us as the object of our delight! Here is a friend perfectly adapted to our immortal nature: as reasonable, to be governed,—as needy, to be supplied,—and as capacitated for sublime enjoyments. How excellent His name, how amiable His tabernacles, how transporting, how free, full, and rich His covenant grace! If so much good seems to be in those things which all the children of men spend much of their time in acquiring, what must be the infinite, real origin, the all-comprehending good! Here, my friend, is an attractive cause, worthy of our unbounded love and delight. Nor does He only possess an infinitude of goodness, love, and grace, but He also liberally communicates, that when we are made truly "poor in spirit," we shall partake to our unspeakable satisfaction, and "heaven begins below." Then, indeed, can we sing, and experience what we sing—

> "Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
> Which before the cross I spend."

"'Have we not known some such moments? and is not "Jesus the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?" When He "created us anew in Christ Jesus," what omnipotence of love did our God exert, and what obstacles, both without and within us, has He mercifully surmounted, that He might make Himself known to us "as He does not to the world!" Have we not, then, great cause to delight in Him? and can we fail of having "the desires of our hearts," while they are fixed supremely on Himself, and regulated by His will? Thus shall "the joy of the Lord become our strength," every inferior enjoyment will be gilded with spiritual delight, and the gall of every trial annihilated. Standing on the rock of free grace in Christ, and "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts," we may, we shall, "rejoice in tribulations also."

"'I have lately been meditating on the Divine all-sufficiency,

and observe that all human defects arise from the want of a firm belief of this glorious attribute. This appears clearly implied in God's address to Abraham, "I am God Almighty," or, as it might be rendered, and as we find it in the old English translation, "I am God all-sufficient: walk before me, and be thou perfect;" as if He had said, Wouldst thou avoid errors and faults in thy walk, preserve sincerity, and press on to perfection in holiness? Maintain a believing, lively sense of my all-sufficiency to defend thee from all harm, to conduct thee through all difficulties, to bestow on thee all real good, and make thee for ever blessed. The same sentiment is expressed in these words,—"I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." And in the failure practically to credit this testimony, lies the fatal cause of all our wanderings from Him, of all perplexities of mind, whether from the state of the mind or our outward circumstances. Does guilt disturb our peace? He is all-sufficient to pardon it; and in virtue of this perfection, the greatest is removed with as much facility as the smallest. Doth sin rebel? He is all-sufficient to subdue it. Do external difficulties harass? He is all-sufficient to counteract or to remove them. Are we therefore His in covenant relations? We are as much interested in the promises as Abraham was; we have the same God to walk with, the same all-sufficiency to rely upon, and the same glory in expectation. Embracing the promise, and improving the privilege as he did, we shall in due time rest in Abraham's bosom. Let us comfort one another with these "hopes of our high calling."

"'I had yesterday some sweet meditations on "God manifest in the flesh." Oh, amazing condescension, stupendous love! what is man to be thus the subject of heavenly mindfulness, the subject of Divine visits! How seldom do my thoughts dwell on the height and depth of this mystery, while the holy angels "desire," with ever new delight, "to look into it." "This is my beloved Son," says God, "in whom I am well pleased." Oh that we were more pleased with Him!—Him whom all the angelic hosts adore,—whom countless myriads own as the only and all-sufficient Saviour! I reproach and condemn myself that I love Him no more, and serve

Him so imperfectly; yet though "my goodness extendeth not to Him," and though I feel myself the chief of sinners, He pardoneth my sins, removeth my guilt, and accepteth my unworthy person. May every future hour help me to love Him more, and serve Him better!

"'Though far from well, I was enabled to preach twice in the open air, the place being too small to contain the people, at Melton, pleading the cause of the poor heathen; when I had the pleasure to see some weeping eyes, and success in the contribution beyond what was expected. *The thought that Otaheite may not improbably, on some future day, become the rival of Great Britain in religious knowledge and civilisation, is animating.* He who hath distinguished Britons has the residue of the Spirit, and His arm is not shortened.

"'By "love of desire," I understand an affection for any being absolutely for its own sake, whereby the soul seeks its ultimate rest and happiness; by "the love of benevolence," I mean an affection for any being for the sake of another. The former is due to God only, and by not giving it to Him, we become idol-makers; the latter is due to creatures only. David, therefore, spoke the strict language of a spiritual mind, when he said, "There is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee," and not barely "in comparison of Thee," as commonly expounded. And, in fact, as he is most happy whose affection is more on God than on himself, so that friendship is most pure, sublime, and strong which centres in, and is maintained for the sake of the chief good.

"'Full confidence in God is a blessed attainment; and the best way to acquire it seems to be this: by habitually aiming at enlarged views of the Divine character of God, as the absolute Sovereign, great and good, gracious and faithful, who has from eternity adjusted all our concerns according to His infinitely wise counsel, "to the praise of His own glory in Christ Jesus." They who thus know, will "put their trust in Him" in the same proportion.

"'The other day, in reading St Augustine, I met with this passage:—"Blessed is he that loveth Thee, O Lord, and his friend in Thee, and his enemy for Thee; for he alone never loseth anything

that is dear, except by losing Him whom he never loseth: and who is this but our God, the God that made heaven and earth?" It gave me great pleasure to find my own sentiments so clearly and decidedly expressed by one who was so great a proficient in the Divine life.'"

During the remaining eighteen years of his life he must have worked with an ardour and incessancy which no physical or mental nature could bear long. The congregation at Masborough was not small,—the college was prosperous,—the productions of his pen were numerous and elaborate. He edited while here the Works of Doddridge, the Works of Edwards, the Psalms and Hymns of Dr Watts, and arranged a supplement to them; published the first edition of his Essay on "Equity and Sovereignty;" published various Sermons, and his "Defence of Modern Calvinism," in answer to the Bishop of Lincoln's "Refutation," as the good prelate called his work. This was *burning* out. When the shining light was extinguished by the tender hand of God, the grief was as general and as deep as any felt in the West Riding since the year 1813, when he rested from his labours in order to enter into the joy of his Lord. On the 9th of March in that year, with the close of the day, his spirit took its flight to the place prepared for him by the Saviour in His Father's house. In his illness he was calm and resigned, and rested all his hopes, as he said to one of his old pupils who visited him a few days prior to his death, on

"Oaths, promises, and blood."

"Not a word, a look, a movement, or a sigh marked the arrest of death. Gently and imperceptibly, on the evening of the above date, he fell asleep, and rested from his labours with the 'blessed that die in the Lord.'"

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION OF HIS PERSON AND CHARACTER.

Being a devoted pupil and an intimate friend of Dr Williams, Mr Gilbert had the best opportunity to form a correct estimate of his mind and the high excellences of his spiritual life, as well as to

give us a correct portrait of his person. The following is his condensed summary:—

"The person of Dr Williams was rather tall and slender, but symmetrical, and of a graceful appearance. The form of his countenance was somewhat long, his features pointed and expressive, but calm, dignified, and carrying an air of composed, retired thought,—in general of deep seriousness. Yet, at times, they were open, bland, animated, and highly cheerful; frequently softened into a smile, but seldom relaxed to laughter. His eye was keen, sometimes brightly flashing, especially when he was roused in argument. His head was finely formed, free from animal expression, and carrying on its well-developed and open front, the signature of ample compass and intellectual activity. When approached by strangers, the retirement of his habits, his aptitude for thinking, rather than for free and ready speaking, added to the dignity of his mien, impressed on his look an appearance of reserve, which might be mistaken for distance and severity; but upon closer intimacy, he was found to be gentle, affable, kind, and ready for conversation.

"Though remarkably calm in habit and expression, he was in disposition tender, and susceptible of deep emotion. Originally his temper might have been capable of sudden excitement, but by the long and rigorous exercise of control, it was completely subdued; so that, on the most irritating occasions, nothing could be discerned but a keener quickness of the eye, and a momentary mantling in the cheek, his language and manner continuing dispassionate and gentle. To a rude remark of one, who had taken offence at a slight but just rebuke, that, 'had he been near, he should certainly have struck him;' the Doctor replied with a smile, 'If you had smote me on the one cheek, I hope I should have turned to you the other also.' The tranquillity of his mind was not disturbed by the most uncourtly and injurious attacks, either from the press or from private opposition. He carried with him everywhere, the same quiet, peaceful, yet firm demeanour, indicating the testimony of an approving conscience, and the settled purpose of upright intention. Few men have united so much

vigour of resolution with so much mildness of conduct. When on difficult and painful occasions, decision was necessary, he was inflexible; but in less important matters, lenient in his censures, and averse from imposing restraint. His authority was always felt, but it was sustained by paternal kindness, and a friendly interest in the concerns of those who were placed under him. Though unwavering in his convictions of truth and duty, and unhesitating in their avowal, not bending his better judgment to the authority of names, or popular sentiment; and, whatever the opposition to be expected, far from timid tameness in the announcement of his views; yet he could scarcely be excelled by any in true humility. Never obtruding his own opinions, nor undervaluing those of others, he was neither dogmatic nor uncandid. He knew how to esteem the good qualities of those who were far his inferiors; and, detaching his mind from the consideration of defects, to derive benefit from simple-hearted piety, though in persons of feeble intellectual power. Indisposed to magnify the faults of any, he felt pleasure in doing justice to their virtues. The superior popularity of his brethren excited in him no envy, nor did any apprehension of unfavourable comparison depress him in the exercise of public duty. He laboured to shew himself a man of God, 'a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,' and was unsolicitous as to personal result.

"In his family he was truly amiable and greatly beloved; to his friends firmly attached, and by them most highly esteemed; to every one affable, to his inferiors condescending, and to those over whom he was placed as tutor, the object of deep veneration.

"His piety was most pure and ardent, though unobtrusive and unaffected. It consisted not at all of superstitious forms and abstinences, but was fed by habitual meditation and prayer, and by occasional seasons of special self-examination and humiliation before God. He seemed constantly to breathe devotion, and his prayers were in nothing so much remarkable as in their fulness, fervency, and depth of adoration. On such occasions he seemed to go as far as man could, in abhorring sin, annihilating self, and glorifying God. The word of God, with every part of which he

was perfectly familiar, was still his constant study; and perceiving as he did the harmony of its doctrines, his mind was unembarrassed, and his heart invigorated by its holy sentiments. Religion was to him not so much duty as enjoyment. Devoted more than many to abstruse thinking, and possessing a ceaseless thirst after knowledge, yet his devotion was not injured by his studies; for he viewed everything in its relation to human obligation and Divine claims. Such was the habitual temperament of his spirit, that all his investigations were practically religious. They led him the more clearly to see, and the more impressively to feel, that all good, and only good, proceeds from God, but that evil is exclusively from the creature; of which the result was a more lowly disesteem of himself, a more exalted admiration of Divine grace, and a more glowing delight in the God of his salvation. In the Divine laws and sanctions, in the procedure of Providence, and the general government of creatures, he recognised nothing unbefitting just conceptions of Deity, nothing capricious, nothing unsanctioned by obvious principles of equity; while everywhere in the work of redemption and human recovery, he beheld, with enraptured admiration, displays of unutterable benevolence, wisdom, power, and mercy. The expiatory efficacy of the Saviour's sacrificial offering, and the renovating influence of the Spirit, were subjects the dearest to his heart, the source of unfailing peace in his soul, and the spring of lively anticipations for the life to come. It may be said truly that he 'delighted himself in the Lord, and that he had the desire of his heart.'

"Though he possessed little of what is, in a sense far too confined, especially denominated genius, his intellectual power was great and peculiarly active. He was not a man of fiction, but of reality; delighting not in excursions of fancy, but in the investigation of truth. He loved to pursue nature through the amplest range of her innumerable works, tracing with sedulous and dutiful admiration the footsteps of his God; but in the creations of man he felt little comparative interest. For the moral sentiment, the chaste satire, and the devotional sublime of

the poet, he had a feeling heart and a kindred taste; but for the airy, the ideal, the descriptive, for the qualities which commonly captivate and entrance, he possessed not responsive emotions. He had imagination enough to illustrate by apt comparison, but not so to adorn his composition as to inspire it with life and action. He could not abstract the mind of his reader from personal consciousness, call up scenes before the eye at pleasure, or make whomsoever he would, follow the bidding of his imagery; but he could instruct the willing learner, and lead forth the attentive mind to a noble maturity of judgment. They who sought repose from doubt, and solid ground to stand on amidst the fluctuations of time, and the approaching realities of eternity, could not commit themselves amongst men to a safer or more skilful guide. To discriminate, disentangle, separate; to make truth and error, right and wrong, be discerned apart; to mark out their boundaries; to set the understanding right, and teach the affections where they might safely wind their flexile shoots, were kindly offices in which he could not be excelled. Truth in everything was to him the greatest attractive; truth in comparatively small things was not uninteresting, in lowly arts, in the more common walks of nature; but truth in morals and theology, the true sciences of man and of God, were, most of all, and amidst all, his darling pursuits. His penetration was keen, his judgment solid, his memory tenacious, and his conceptions clear and forcible. In closeness of argument he had few equals, and such was his pleasure in it, that he noted no flight of time while so engaged.

"Yet it will be believed by those who intimately knew him, that it was not the excitement of mental exercise, so much as the hope of imparting knowledge, by which he was animated. He had a great love of method in everything, much taste in music, and a turn for mechanical invention. Always active and capable of deep research, he was a man of powerful intellect, as well as of energetic piety.

"But though he must have been originally endowed with a vigorous and capacious mind, he was much indebted to assiduous

culture. As a man of study, he has been seldom surpassed for industry and perseverance. If from his entrance at college to the day of his death he ever remitted the severity of incessant application, it was when, with impaired health and an afflicted family, he resided for a short space at Birmingham. Had not his constitution been originally vigorous, he must long before have sunk under the effects of incessant thought and destitution of bodily exercise, as at last he doubtless did. The accounts received of him in the earlier parts of his official life agree in stating that he was always in his study or at lecture, except when engaged in some professional employment elsewhere. It is added that he generally rose early, and sometimes continued his work till the night was far spent. In the latter years of his life, though he seldom sat up late, and rose at no unusual hour, yet his habits were the same. No inducements could prevail on him to give repose to his mind, or active stimulus to his bodily frame. The little supper he had he often took alone in his study, and when the morning light visited his chamber, though he did not rise, he read in bed.

"His acquaintance with books, as must be inferred, was very extensive and various; and in divinity especially there was scarcely an author of eminence, foreign or domestic, with whose works he was not well acquainted. To mental philosophy, as subservient to his favourite science, he had been scarcely less attentive, and had marked its progress and decline in the writings of all schools, —American, French, German, English, and Scotch; amongst the sceptical, the Unitarian, the ideal, the experimental, and the moral inquirers.

"Though, judging them of little value, he was not skilled in the critical niceties on which eminent scholars in classical literature pride themselves, yet he had a substantial acquaintance with the most celebrated authors of antiquity in Latin and Greek, a sound knowledge of Hebrew, some of other Eastern languages, and a competent familiarity with French. The Welsh was his native tongue, and late in life he read some German, but to what extent the writer is incompetent to say.

"He had a taste for mathematics, and would doubtless have ex-

celled in them had other engagements permitted the requisite application. He had, however, studied them sufficiently to discipline his mind, and to answer the ordinary purposes of general scientific inquiry. With the principles of physical philosophy and chemistry, he had a good degree of acquaintance; and, at different times, had turned his mind, less or more, to almost every department of knowledge. History in general, but particularly ecclesiastical, had engaged a deep attention; and he was intimate with the writings of the earlier fathers. In biography he found a pleasing amusement; his memory was amply furnished with remarkable incidents in the lives of learned men, and the peculiarities of persons who had distinguished themselves by their genius or their acquirements.

"By his various knowledge, his liberal views, the simplicity of his character, his gentleness and urbanity of manners, his fervent, pervading piety; by his consistency and blamelessness of deportment, his solid judgment, his catholic principles, his public spirit, and his intimate familiarity with every question relating to theology, he was unquestionably qualified, in no common degree, for his office as a tutor of youth for the Christian ministry.

"The confidence reposed in him, while yet young, by Dr Davies, who had the best opportunity of knowing him, has been already seen; and the number of years during which he continued to discharge that important duty, with honour to himself, to the satisfaction of patrons and friends, and the benefit of the churches, amply confirm the original estimate of his character and powers.

"In college discipline, though attentive to rule, Dr Williams was not rigorous. He allowed particular seasons for relaxation of the mind, and strong bodily exercise; admitting, and, apparently, approving such manly games as were adapted to brace the system, give tone to muscular fibre, and prepare for more vigorous application to study. He knew the importance of health to usefulness, and conceded to others what it appears he had never indulged in himself. In all respects he acted as a friend, as a father; was accessible to those who wished to consult him, attentive to the

interests of his pupils while under his care, and to their prospects on leaving his roof. Nor did he afterwards become indifferent to their welfare, but was always, in correspondence, ready to offer advice, as circumstances might require. Few men have been more, or more deservedly, beloved by those who had been under their control.

"As a minister, the Doctor was not of the popular, but of the instructive class. Sound in doctrine, full in matter, clear in statement, methodical in plan, judicious in thought, consecutive in argument, familiar in illustration, earnest, grave, impressive in appeal, his sermons were adapted, not for the careless, but the attentive hearer,—not for momentary effect, but for lasting utility. He seldom introduced difficult subjects or abstract argument into the pulpit, but treated on the most important concerns of the soul with a wisdom and an importunate earnestness which became a minister of Christ, and a steward of Divine and holy truth. His great concern was to win souls, and to edify, comfort, warn, and instruct those who already believed. He could not so rouse and excite an auditory as many much his inferiors can, nor would he descend to any arts for temporary applause; but the genuine inquirer could not attend his ministry without satisfaction, nor the unthinking and neglectful without reproof and serious admonition. Doctrine he always presented in a practical aspect, and practice he enforced from evangelical principles. He especially knew how to discriminate, to detect hypocrisy, to confirm true faith, to rouse the slothful, and to strengthen the sincere, but fainting follower of Christ. Rightly to divide the word of truth, to enforce the right of God to govern His creatures, and to illustrate and magnify His grace in saving sinners, was his aim, and in that aim he eminently succeeded. Though some have thought but lightly of his preaching, the writer of this memoir can truly say he never heard one, to his own feeling and taste, more deeply interesting, or more genuinely instructive. Everywhere his ministry was much blessed to many, who will be his crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ Jesus.

"As a pastor, he was careful to maintain the discipline of a

church of Christ, ready for consultation on every occasion of public or private urgency, attentive to the sick, familiar with the poor, and, as far as opportunity admitted, desirous of cultivating personal acquaintance with his congregation.

"Of that life, and of those labours, it has been the wish of the author to present a faithful narrative; and he humbly hopes that the exhibition of a character which he so highly venerates will excite the ardour, stimulate the diligence, encourage the hope, and feed the piety of some, at least, who may take the trouble to read the volume in which it is contained. Certainly, if 'the memory of the just is blessed,' and 'the righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance,' the name, the virtues, the talents, and the works of Dr Williams ought to be dear to the Church."

NOTE BY THE EDITOR.

Dr Williams is best known as a theological writer by his treatise on "Equity and Sovereignty." No one can rise from its thoughtful perusal without feeling it to have been a profitable exercise. Multitudes have felt what Dr Chalmers has expressed in the following terms:—

"I am now reading Williams on 'Divine Equity and Sovereignty.' He makes no reference to Leibnitz, though I think his system is substantially the same. I trust I read it with impression. His views encourage the fostering of every good desire and purpose, and the confident forth-putting of all our activities in the Divine life, seeing that God is represented as honestly intent on the salvation of all who will, and there is no adverse decree in the way of our sincere endeavour to be and to do what He would have us. They also put us in the right attitude for that moral victory after which we aspire, the attitude of entire diffidence in ourselves, seeing that nothing but defect and infirmity attach to the creature, and of entire confidence in God, from whom alone strength can be perfected in weakness. These views of Leibnitz and Williams I hold to be of great value in theology, both as subserving the vindication of God, and the practical guidance of man."

Again he writes:—

"The discourse of one of my students, (Mr G. M. D.,) and Williams's book together, have had an enlightening and confirmatory effect on me."

Further he states:—

"Exercised by the serious illness of a near and dear friend, and by another trying event in her family. It is well to be conversant among great elements—life and death, reason and madness. It gives a pettiness to the lesser interests of time, and withdraws from them that intense ἐπιθυμία

which wars against the soul. And in connexion with this external discipline there is something directive and confirmatory in Williams. I want to feel my own nothingness, to give myself up in absolute resignation to God, to lie prostrate and passive at His feet, with no other disposition in my heart than that of resigning my will into His will, and no other language in my mouth than that of prayer for the perfecting of His strength in my weakness. I think that Williams's views are fitted to encourage one in God, to unrobe Him of that predestinarian severity in which a mistaken ultra-Calvinism has arrayed Him, to make us enter more into the confidence and all the feelings of a moral relationship with Him who made us; in particular, to proceed on the plain calls and assurances of Scripture in the obvious interpretation of them, regarding God as pleased with our faintest, if honest, aspirations towards Him, and taking comfort to ourselves in the consciousness of our own sincerity, in a heart that does not condemn us. Williams puts Calvinism on a more practical footing than most of its expounders do; and I desire, from the abyss of my own nothingness and vileness, to cry unto God, that He might cause me to do as I ought, and to be as I ought."*

It is somewhat singular there is only one allusion to Leibnitz in Dr Williams's writings. It is hardly conceivable that a person possessing such extensive acquaintance with philosophy and theology should not be versed in the learned Baron's speculations and works; yet it is morally certain, that if he felt himself indebted to him for any of his views, or any modification of them, such were Dr Williams's candour, sense of honour and right, that he would, in the most explicit manner, have acknowledged his obligations. By whatever process the similarity referred to by Dr Chalmers may have occurred, it is quite certain it was by no act of base plagiarism. We must therefore conclude that it was the result of two independent minds working out the same problems, and coming to common conclusions respecting them.

Numbers of authors might be quoted who have expressed similar opinions and feelings in much stronger phraseology. I shall, however, only adduce one more, and that from the late Dr R. Winter Hamilton. In order the better to understand his note on Dr Williams, it seems necessary to insert the following passage:—

"That a creature must be imperfect, and limited, and dependent, simply requires the proof that he is a creature. That no creature can be otherwise formed, only wants the proof of the self-evident

* Sabbath Exercises.

fact, that no creature can be independent of *him* who formed him. That such a creature is justly dealt with in being left to the necessary laws of his nature, merely asks the proof which arises from the inverse proposition, that then it must be unjust to form any creature at all. That no moral sustentation is due to the creature, but seeks the proof that favour or grace is no term of justice, and can never be needed to set it with an honourable aspect before the intelligent universe. And on these grounds the defection of man was certain, as most *justly treated*, as most *freely left*, as most *infallibly foreseen!* For as little can these negative certainties be questioned as the noblest demonstration of mathematical truth, which is, after all, evolved from a point, a thing of no quantity, and really a nothing."

To the above statement, extracted from his sermon on "Jesus Christ the Creator and Lord of the Universe," Dr Hamilton appends the following note:—

"I believe that greatest master of divinity, that more than Augustine of our age, the late Dr Edward Williams of Rotherham, has somewhere in his writings a similar figure. I remember not where it is to be found. It will be a happy bait to that man who will be content to seek it, though he should find it in the last sentence his mortal hand ever impressed. When he is read and understood, the deterioration of the modern ministry (and some assert it) will be an unsupported charge."

In studying the various theories of Dr Williams, and in reading with care his works, nothing is more strikingly obvious than the hallowing influence all his views had on his own mind and heart. Dr Chalmers felt this; Dr Wardlaw did also. Indeed, no one with any susceptibility of feeling at all, on such themes as he discussed, can avoid yielding to the influences Dr Williams experienced himself so largely. The same may be said of the works of President Edwards. Both bring the soul into the presence of God, and shew its nothingness, its sin, and its absolute dependence; and both exhibit the blessed Jehovah as possessing all possible perfections, but so loving, and tender, and ready, infinitely ready, to give to all that ask Him all good things; so the soul is subdued with the deepest humility, and then elevated by the grace Divine into the highest strains of gratitude and adoration. This itself is

no small recommendation of the works and theories of Dr Williams.

Great lucidness may be pointed out as another characteristic of these works. All the author's conceptions were distinguished, as *a rule*,—I must confess to exceptions,—by special distinctness as well as depth. They are presented to us, therefore, as in vivid light. Hence his "Treatise on Equity and Sovereignty" will be valued by every student of such subjects as one of his best treasures, while even he may not accept all his specific views. His Answer to the Bishop of Lincoln, exhibiting Christian urbanity in a remarkable degree, abounds with conceptions at once definite and comprehensive, set forth in a crystal style. He seems never to think in a cloud. The sky is clear, and every object is well-defined and made visible. He used, for the most part, only the ordinary language of theology common to him and divines of his class. When, however, constrained to adopt any new terminology, his effort to explain his meaning was beyond all praise. In clearness, Dr Williams has, therefore, been rarely excelled. His logic is all but faultless. The character of his mind and of his works is in this respect thoroughly British. He seems always to have felt that new terms were awkward things, and, in the hands of authors of the second class, are but clumsy tools at best, and far better left alone, at least by them.

Comprehensiveness is another feature of our author's mind and works, as prominent as clearness. His mind sought apparently always to grasp the whole subject in all its bearings. Till he could do this, he appears to have no rest. He pursued his investigations to their ultimate principles, or at least attempted to do so. Unless he found a firm foundation in these, he felt no satisfaction. Before he began to build, he spared no pains. His theories, in his best judgment, comprehended the principles that were fundamental, as well as their results. The whole structure was present in his mind, not in some of its parts and details merely, but in its entireness. Effects or results were traced to their causes, and the nature of the causes was investigated, analysed, or defined, so that nothing was taken for granted if in his power to account for it.

His views on Freedom and Necessity, on Power, his Outline of Moral Science, and the Origin of Moral Evil, are illustrative of this characteristic of his mind and labours. This tendency led him naturally into all depths, and to examine all profundities. If, therefore, sometimes light failed him, and he lost himself, and others, whose power of vision was not equal to his own, lost sight of him too, it is not to be wondered at; and it is but reasonable to suppose, therefore, that his convictions could not, if on no other ground than this, be always shared in by others. This excellency could not at all times secure a successful result; it is not within the compass of human powers that it should. Unsuccessful labour, nevertheless, is not without profit. Failure in philosophic and moral investigations honestly conducted is instructive in various ways; for some progress will have been made even although the goal may not be reached. Some obstructions in the way of others may at least have been removed; so that the failure of one, if especially a great mind, may be of immense advantage to generations of thinkers. To illustrate this last statement in connexion with Dr Williams's Works would be easy. Many who have regarded what he deemed a demonstration of the problem, Whence the origin of moral evil? to be a failure, have themselves reaped no small amount of good from that very failure. To adduce proof of this would, however, lead me too far away from the purpose of this note.

It is clear that with nothing in the whole range of his investigations was Dr Williams more abundantly satisfied than with his theory on the origin of moral evil. His own convictions respecting it were precisely, in point of unquestioned confidence of its truth, the same as those he felt with regard to any demonstrated geometrical problem. He wondered that all others did not see it in the light in which he did. That it should not be regarded as DEMONSTRATION, was to him a source of feeling amounting almost to vexation. It is undoubtedly a pity that he draped his theory, right or wrong, in a mathematical costume. It is only to a limited extent, most assuredly, that mathematics can aid the mind in coming to right conclusions on the varied subjects of moral philosophy

and theology. It is obvious that in Dr Williams's mind the figure consisted of *passive power*, forming one right line, falling on *liberty*, which formed the other, and the angles were *moral evil*. Let the careful reader ask, Does geometry assist theology here? The clearness belongs to the figure only, and not by any means, I suspect, to the subject it is designed to illustrate. The theory maintains, for instance, that *liberty* is an evil in no sense *per se;* but that *passive power* is a *natural*, not a moral evil, and it is defined and described as a tendency to defection morally considered, just as it is a tendency to nihility physically considered. If the latter be a tendency to physical nihility, the other must be, according to the terms of the definition, a tendency to moral defection. This latter tendency is most assuredly the very point about which we are to account. The tendency to nihility is a tendency to the antecedent condition of that which possesses it, but a tendency to moral defection is not a tendency to any antecedent condition, for the antecedent condition of man was perfection as to moral character. While, therefore, one part of the definition asserts a tendency to an antecedence, the other part evidently asserts a tendency to a *sequitur*—namely, moral defection, or defection morally considered; which defection could not, in the nature of things, or according to the theory, have any antecedent existence, like nihility. How this defection comes to pass, is the very thing to be accounted for. As the theory now stands, and thus investigated, it does little more, if anything, than assert that moral evil exists, and that human nature has, as a matter of universal fact, a tendency to evil. The origin of this tendency, whence and how came it, is the problem to be solved. Further; let the following positions, in order to get a fuller view of the whole theory, be well considered in their bearings on it:—

i. From the Creator nothing but good can proceed. Let this position be regarded as emphatic and universal as it can be made. To trace to Him any evil—of course I am speaking of evil in the sense of *sin*—would be to my mind tantamount to denying His existence. A malevolent God presents to us an idea that destroys itself. My instinctive nature and my reasoning powers

will not admit of it, even as a comprehensible thought. The conception is so incongruous and monstrous, that nothing in man's nature can endure it but madness. I am fully aware that the philosophic Necessarians and the Hyper-Calvinists have apparently maintained the above sentiment. They have been driven to this by the pressure of a theory. Not one of them could stand up and look the blessed Jehovah in the face,—may I be pardoned for speaking so anthropopathically!—and say, Thou art a maleficent Being, and the cause of the wickedness of the world. The horrid idea they have detached from the holy being of God, and fixed it in a theory. Hence, as it appears to me, they have deluded themselves to its endurance and adoption. I cannot pursue this point further,—to prove, that, if it be true, there can be no sin, and that responsibility is a figment,—but must satisfy myself with saying, that no sane mind, observing its own instincts, listening to the dictates of its own consciousness, and studying the perfections of the eternal God, and the teaching of the inspired volume, can hesitate for a moment to admit the position as impregnable,—which the theory of Dr Williams most abundantly maintains,—*that nothing but good can proceed from the Creator.* Moral evil, therefore, cannot have God for its cause.

ii. Nothing can exist without a cause; the Creator himself excepted. Self-existence, that is, existence without a causal antecedence, belongs only to God. Neither matter nor mind, nor yet any condition or state of either, can exist without an adequate cause. Here President Edwards, Dr Williams, and philosophers of the same class, are unassailable. Some have maintained, for instance, that every act of will is a creation. If by that, it be meant that it is the product of no cause whatever, *it is God.* To refute this would be to repeat the argumentation of Edwards. Whatever consequences may flow from the position, that existence with its modes and qualities must have an adequate cause, and whatever philosophical perplexities may grow out of it, the position itself appears to me to have all the completeness of an axiom: it asserts its own truth; itself is its own evidence. Moral evil must therefore have a cause; else it is God.

iii. Every cause can produce effects only in harmony with its own nature, and to the amount of its own adequacy. If the cause is good, the result must be good; if evil, the effects must be so too; if without a moral character, the consequences will have none. This position seems so plain, self-evident, that argument appears out of place altogether. But—

iv. No combination of causes can yield results different in their moral character from the causes in operation. If the causes, though many, have no moral character, neither can the consequences have any; if good, the effects too must inevitably be good; if mixed, so will their results be. *These positions* (*i.e.*, Nos. iii. and iv.) *form the ground of all certitude.* Deny them, and no one can tell what will come next; and the world, philosophically considered, is thrown into a chaos. If there be any one who can come to a conclusion adverse to these positions, I have no conception whatever of the process of reasoning through which, or by means of which, he has reached his conclusion. His philosophy gives him at least a life of unmitigated doubt. He does not know but his fire may freeze his pot, instead of boiling it: he has no certitude. He does not know but that his wife, though he believes her to be the best woman in the world, may give him poison instead of food: he has no certitude. He does not know on his philosophy that love or hate exists, or will exist; for he has no certitude. Nevertheless he *acts* constantly on the principle of certitude; and what is the sure foundation of that principle but the two foregoing positions? It seems to me that all the proceedings of man without any exceptions whatever are conducted on these principles. But I must proceed to another position before shewing the bearings of these on the subject in hand.

v. The nature of causes may be inferred from their effects. *This is the foundation of all evidence*—of course, evidence derived from reasoning. If the nature of a cause cannot be inferred from the character of the consequence, evidence is surely out of the question, and this kind of investigation is absurd. I do not comprehend the ratiocination that can set this position aside as untenable.

vi. It follows, therefore, that a privative cause—without investigating now the question, What is meant by a *privative* cause?—can only yield privative results. This position depends on Nos. iii. and iv. above. If the above be true, this must be too.

vii. Sin must have a cause; it is a result; and the cause must possess the same character as the result. This conclusion seems inevitable. But—

viii. The cause of sin cannot be evil; for if it were, that would be only moving the subject a step backward, and retaining all the difficulty in its entire fulness and force. Dr Williams evidently felt this, and labours hard to ward off its force; and hence he asserts, without any qualification whatever, that the cause of moral evil is not itself evil,—*i.e.*, in other words, causes yield results totally different in moral character from themselves. This theory sets aside, therefore, the positions I have numbered iii., iv., and v.

ix. It seems, therefore, that the conclusion to which we must irresistibly come is, that the problem, Whence or how comes moral evil? is insoluble. Its cause cannot be evil; but causes only yield results of the same moral character with themselves; therefore, if moral evil be a sequence or a result, its cause must be evil also, according to position iii. But this makes the theory suicidal, because the cause of sin cannot be itself sinful; yet sin must have a cause; and no cause can produce effects except of the same character with itself; therefore the cause of sin must be itself sinful. This conclusion is against the theory; here we have nothing, therefore, but self-destruction.

While Dr Williams, in his investigations, has thrown much light on collateral subjects, I submit the question, Whether or not he has thrown any light on the topic itself? I am the more confirmed in the adverse conviction, for this reason. Dr Williams maintains, as Mr Gilbert as his commentator maintains more strongly than he, that sin, as to its essence, is privative. If positive consequences will follow, that will overthrow the theory. "The acts of sin," says the latter, in illustrating the Doctor's view on this point, "as acts, are positive, and imply physical causation; but that which gives the character of moral evil to them is *failure*,

the absence of right principles or lawful methods of procedure." Unquestionably he feels here the force of the position, that causes produce results of the same moral character only with themselves; for as the cause of sin, according to theory, must be privative, therefore sin itself must be privative. The theory will not hang on a positive cause. Is there nothing, it may surely be asked, in the sin of murder, for instance, that is *positive*, except and besides the physical act of plunging the dagger into the victim's heart? Is there nothing positive in a lie but the movements of the organ of speech by which it is uttered? Is all beyond this a piece of negation—a mere want—a failure? I most readily grant that any one of these terms may truly exhibit sinfulness in the creature; but does either of them, or all of them, or any other of a merely privative import that may be added to them, exhaust the subject, and set forth, with anything like adequacy, the whole essence, the full and real nature of sin? Is envy, malice, revenge, hatred, or blasphemy, each a mere negative, a mere absence of right, without any positive element whatever? Is the sin of the world, beyond or besides any physical acts that may be associated with it, a negation! Here the entire theory breaks down irreparably.

The fact is, it appears to me, that the valuable tendency in Dr Williams's mind, which I have called and described as *comprehensiveness*, made him dissatisfied with mere fragmentary notions, or scattered facts, as he would regard them, without any logical *vincula*. Such he would estimate the elements of this investigation: such as—that sin exists;—that sin must have a cause;—that all causes yield results of the same moral character with themselves;—that therefore the cause of sin must itself be sinful;—but that the cause of sin cannot be itself sinful, for that would destroy the theory and stultify the inquiry, and accomplish nothing but removing the inquiry a step backward with no advantage whatever;—and that, therefore, the problem, Whence or how came moral evil? is, in the nature of things, and according to positions which must be universally admitted as true, *to us*, insolvable. In the face of this, for the subject must have *flashed*, at least,

across his mind in this form occasionally, Dr Williams cherished, nevertheless, the conviction of a demonstration, and was confirmed in it because he had viewed the subject through a mathematical medium. Further; he defines liberty, for instance, in language at once happy, full, and terse. Its essential idea is negative, but he converts it into a positive one, and makes it terminate on passive power. Passive power is a negative idea too. It in like manner is converted into a positive notion, and hence it is capable of receiving on itself the terminating point of liberty, and the result of this junction is moral evil. How? The theory does not, however, shew. Dr Williams must have felt the halting of the scheme when he penned the following explanatory language:—"Each of them"—*i. e.*, liberty and passive power—"is essentially necessary to the effect; but as freedom is an evil in no sense *per se*, and passive power is a *natural* (though not a moral) evil *per se*, it should seem that the hateful progeny, *sin*, claims the latter for its more immediate parent." This unquestionably *implies* a doubt as to whether liberty was absolutely essential to the genesis of moral evil. So the phrases, "*natural* evil," and "defection morally considered," helped him apparently to the idea, without the junction of liberty, which he was unconsciously deluded to believe his theory set forth. Liberty and passive power are facts, no doubt, but there is nothing in the theory to prove that *they* have generated moral evil. Mere co-existence—no other junction, in fact, can well be imagined, much less proved—does not demonstrate the problem. Man has the power of *thinking*, and he has the power of *feeling;* and why may we not say, according to the terms of this scheme, *emotion* or feeling, falling upon thought,—or take the reverse,—produced moral evil? May not this junction, if junction it must be called, account as well as the above for the mournful fact of moral evil? Dr Williams was, it would seem, then, blinded by the unfortunate expressions, "natural evil" and "defection," and his mathematical figure, to the defects, fatal defects as I think, of his own system.

I have endeavoured to go through the processes of his reasonings on the subject and the workings of his moral nature, and this is the

conclusion to which I have been constrained to come. It is passing strange that so comprehensive and profound a thinker as Dr Williams did not see that although he was employing the bare language of mathematics, yet in its application to the subject of moral evil it was excessively figurative. Instead of the figure of one line terminating on another, if he had got hold of the figure of parallel lines, he might have seen the subject in a different light. For instance, liberty exists now in all the fulness it did before the genesis of moral evil. Passive power does also. They exist together. They are not now the cause, they doubtless often are the occasion, of moral evil. Because there is that in human nature besides them, neither of which is *per se* morally evil, which will result in moral evil with as much certainty as that there is that in human nature which will result in *thinking*, or *seeing;* and that, however it came into our nature, is itself evil. Hence it appears to me, that parallel lines would represent liberty and passive power better than right lines terminating one upon the other, and making the hateful angle of sin, which has a cause now at least besides them. And as they are not evil themselves, it is difficult to see how their *junction*, admitting the angular figure, can cause evil.

Whatever deduction we may be constrained to make from this theory, *that* affects but in the slightest degree, at most, the merits of Dr Williams's works in general, and of his "Treatise on Equity and Sovereignty" in particular. The above remarks are submitted to the reader with unfeigned deference as mere hints. I am fully aware that they are incomplete and *sketchy*, but to have exhausted the subject would have been to write a volume. I trust they may nevertheless prove suggestive, and help in some small measure to independent thinking on such themes.*

* In bringing my labours to a close, I have only two or three things to say to the reader. Dr Williams's Works need no prefaces, so I supply none. There being no need of them, they could have no meaning. I have resisted many temptations in the progress of my work to supply notes in explanation, in confirmation, or in opposition. In the few instances I have yielded, I trust I may be pardoned. I did not wish to place myself between the reader and the author. I have tried to stand on one side always, and have only occasionally said what I thought might yield some aid. I owe many thanks to many persons, and the reader owes them.

First and foremost, to the son and daughter—the surviving children of Dr Williams. May their setting sun go down with as much glory as did that of their venerated sire! The Rev. James Rhys Kilsby Jones, of London, rendered willing and efficient help. I tender him my thanks. To the Rev. Morris Jones, formerly of Varteg, in Monmouthshire, I am under obligation, which I beg to acknowledge with gratitude. To many ministers in Wales, and editors of various Welsh periodicals, and to a few ministers in England, too numerous to mention by name, I owe sincere thanks, which they all will do me the justice to believe to be such, and as such accept. I will here say *farewell* to the reader, and leave him in the company of Dr Williams, and pray that a blessing from heaven may come down as light into his mind, and devotion into his heart; and that he may be, like Dr Williams himself, transformed by these views of Divine truth in an eminent degree into the image of JESUS CHRIST!

E. D.

RICHMOND LODGE, DALSTON,
June 1862.

EQUITY AND SOVEREIGNTY.

INTRODUCTION.

It is now more than twenty years since the author of the following Essay was led to contemplate with peculiar attention, through the medium of the sacred writings, God's mediatorial covenant and its various dispensations. In the course of his inquiries, he could not but observe an evident *difference* between what may be denominated the internal form, and the outward administration of this merciful plan, as clearly implied in the whole tenor of Divine revelation: that, while the former is a decretive design of enriching those who are finally saved with victorious grace and everlasting happiness, the latter is a benevolent exhibition of the good we need, by testimony, by proclamation, or by positive institutions, under a conditional form, addressed to men as totally unrestrained in their elections; and that each economy is conducted by a process worthy of infinite wisdom. He was thus unavoidably induced to view man as at once a passive receiver of ordained benefits, and a free agent; and the more accurately he weighed this distinction, the more completely he became satisfied of its great importance in relation both to the blessings we partake and the account we must finally render of our conduct: since, throughout the sacred writings, human beings are represented, under one aspect, as endowed freely with various bounties,—as brought into life, preserved, renovated, and qualified to offer to the Lord acceptable service; and, under another aspect, as possessed of active powers or faculties to which are proposed objects of choice,—good laws, gracious promises, and

eternal felicity,—accompanied with awful threats of punishment to the disobedient.

On comparing these representations of Scripture with the just principles of moral science, and finding them harmonious, the author was convinced that each might be successfully employed in the service of the other; that as the sacred oracles wonderfully illustrate scientific principles, so the latter might in return be made to confirm the reasonableness of revealed facts. This appeared to apply with peculiar force to the much-controverted doctrines of *liberty* and *necessity;* and these litigated subjects, and the preceding views of man, being so intimately connected, he was led to attempt a more critical review of both.

In this pursuit, to which he was not a little animated by the importance of the probable result, he saw great reason to conclude that the plan of redeeming grace, occupying a part so prominent and so ample in the sacred pages, is, in all its evolutions, a glorious object of decretive necessity; and that the outward administration of that plan, occupying a part still more prominent and ample, is an important display of the doctrine of liberty. But since liberty and necessity had been commonly considered, by their respective advocates, as incompatible with each other, a new object of inquiry occurred: Whether the scriptural doctrine of man being *at once,* under different aspects, both necessitated and free, be or be not philosophically accurate? Nor was it long before the affirmative of the question appeared obvious, and that on principles the most solid and satisfactory.

Since the uniform declarations and tenor of Scripture (with which a few expressions of a different aspect are easily reconciled) regard man, when under the influence of decretive necessity, antecedently and irrespectively considered, as the subject of some *benefit,* there appeared just cause for inferring that such a necessity does not include the sinfulness of moral acts. It is not admissible that the First Agent can be the source of all good and of all evil alike: He can be the sovereign *cause* (as distinguished from an equitable avenger of demerit) of good only. Now the decrees of God are the expression of His *nature,* no less than of His will; and, therefore, the necessitating causation implied in them must be exclusively a good operation. Admitting the fact of a Being who is infinitely good and wise, His energies in creation and providence must be worthy of these perfections. Thus, particularly, all physi-

cal operations, the mechanism of the universe, the properties and laws of matter and motion, notwithstanding individuals are occasionally sufferers by their influence,—all these are worthy of Divine, voluntary, sovereign necessitation. Not only does the sum of beneficial effects, upon the whole, far exceed that of occasional suffering, but every operation of providence, without exception, is in itself directly good; and the same remark is applicable to the world of minds, to the constitution of intelligent natures, and to the influence of which, in any respect, they are the subjects.

Here, however, a difficulty presented itself. Since good exclusively appears worthy of God's irrespective necessitation; while the conviction is forced upon us by the united testimony of common sense, of conscience, and of Scripture, that there are in the world *evils* which God hates and condemns; how could the futurition of those evils be pronounced *certain*, as it is so pronounced in the language of Divine predictions? What plausible ground of their certainty remains, while a necessitating decree of them is rejected as infinitely unworthy of the Supreme Governor? The author observed that the advocates of philosophical necessity, by assuming false data, and too much neglecting the light afforded by Divine revelation, are not a little embarrassed on this head. Many of them, in their efforts to preserve self-consistency, throw down the main pillars of a moral system altogether, and deny even the possibility of moral evil. According to their doctrine, everything, without exception or distinction, is of decretive necessity. This, perhaps, is not the exact epithet they would use; but if called philosophical, or metaphysical, the idea is yet precisely the same. He who maintains that the *defective manner* of a physical act of the will is included in the Divine purpose and energy, must, in order to be consistent, conclude, that man (though he is the subject of innumerable associations, and all the result of circumstances) is *as much* impelled to the murderous villany of his free act, as a dog is impelled, by his instinctive propensity and the will of his master, to worry a sheep, or to kill a hare. This, indeed, is the unavoidable consequence, on the assumed principle that all certainty flows from the Divine will and purpose, to the exclusion of a *negative* ground of certainty in moral actions. But the admission of the latter, properly applied, solves the difficulty at once; and it was peculiarly gratifying to the writer of these

pages to discover that no principle in the whole range of science is capable of being more firmly established.

The author was aware that there were many persons of great and deserved celebrity, who went little further than to ascribe to God the causation of good only, with a bare denial of His being the "author of sin;" and who, when pressed with the question, how the certain futurition of denounced evil, proclaimed in the language of prophecy, and the Divine causation of it, can be separated in a clear and satisfactory manner, were accustomed to return for answer, "Beware of going too far; we shall know it well in a future state." After all, however, as it must confessedly be a good and useful event to be well informed on this point in another world, there seems no sufficient reason why further information in the present should be dreaded as remarkably dangerous. If some have been unprofitably perplexed in their researches, it by no means follows that we are to regard the question as a speculative nicety, productive of small advantage, supposing it to be satisfactorily answered. It is, on the contrary, in the humble judgment of the writer, one of primary importance, intimately connected with almost every branch of moral philosophy, and with the whole system of revelation respecting sin and grace. These topics of religion are founded in eternal truth; and a clear perception of their sources is calculated both to delight the understanding, and invigorate the heart. The inspired oracles do not, perhaps, expressly state the ultimate source of sin, (and the same may be said of many other points of confessed importance,) but they afford ample evidence from whence the conclusion may be deduced. They constantly maintain that GOD is the source of our good; and that we OURSELVES are the cause of our moral evil. The scattered rays of these primary truths are brought by the apostle James into a focus:—"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." * Here we are plainly taught, that

* James i. 13–17.

GOD is the origin of all good, so as to exclude the idea of His being the source of any moral evil; and that the origin of human moral evil is in MAN, so as to exclude every cause exterior to himself: from which two ideas, as will hereafter be shewn, it inevitably follows, that the origin of moral evil is a negative principle.

The Scriptures also fully state an essential difference between the Creator and the creature: ascribing to the one, self-existence, independence, and all-sufficiency; to the other, a derived existence, absolutely dependent on the First Cause, and therefore without any sufficiency which is not communicated. And this is affirmed absolutely, as applying not less to all creatures, than to some,—to creatures we do not know, than to those whom we *do* know. It matters not in what period, nor in what part of the universe, they exist, or may exist; nor how excellent and exalted may be their nature or endowments. Grant that they are contingent, and not absolute beings,—created, or caused to exist by an uncaused agent,—and they are by that very admission, as an essential consequence of their existence, stamped with limitation or comparative defect. By exalting their nature, and magnifying their powers, we only magnify and exalt the cause in whom they "live, move, and have their being:" abstracted from which, through every successive moment, their nature, their existence, their powers, and their operations, are as NOTHING.

After viewing this truth, equally awful and indubitable, in relation to every individual creature, and to the whole created universe, through the medium of revealed principles; and after dwelling upon it habitually as a point closely connected with personal religion; the author could not resist, had he been desirous of resisting, the evidence which presented itself, as clearly implied in the preceding considerations, respecting the true source of the futurition of moral evil. Were the event of human transgression to originate in the nature of God, or in His will, ever conformable to His nature, it could not be evil; He could not abhor and condemn it: and were it to originate exclusively in man's active powers, it must ultimately proceed from God, involving the same consequences as though directly willed by Him. It must, therefore, originate, not in God, not in chance, not in a self-determining power of the will, (which is clearly reducible to a contradiction;) but in a principle of defectibility in a free agent, the operation of which, nevertheless, the all-sufficient Source of good is always able to pre-

vent. And there is no scheme but must come to this conclusion at last: that it is within the province of the Divine prerogative to prevent countless millions of moral evils, which in fact He permits, and which, were it inconsistent with His infinite wisdom, or with the exercise of any Divine perfection, He would not permit.

The PRINCIPLE from which this conclusion is deduced, the author cannot consent to regard as a mere *hypothesis* concerning the origin of moral evil. So far from this, he is convinced it is a truth necessarily implied in a demonstration of the First Cause, with which it must stand or fall. Hypothesis implies an unproved supposition as the basis of a theory, or a system formed on a principle gratuitously assumed; but here no data are assumed, which are not either granted by all as first principles, or the negation of which does not involve a direct contradiction. In moral science, indeed, there is no axiom so perfectly self-evident as to be exempt from cavils. By some unhallowed lips, even the existence of Deity has been called into doubt; but mere denial can never be thought sufficient to discredit the pretensions of demonstration, provided that denial be reducible to an evident absurdity.

There is one consideration of great importance on this head, which has been very generally disregarded—viz., that to ascertain the true *origin* of moral evil is very different from ascertaining the precise *mode* of its origination.* When this distinction is not considered, it ceases to be a matter of surprise that prejudice and dislike should fortify the mind against every effort of inquiry. Conceding the identity of these propositions, the writer could not hesitate for a moment to conclude that, on this subject, a demonstration would be impossible; inasmuch as there would be no conceivable data for demonstrative evidence. God, indeed, might condescend to reveal the mode in which the first sin of an angelic being, for instance, originated, as a matter of testimony to be be-

* To the general philosopher, and particularly to the physiologist and chemist, it will easily [*readily?*] occur, that the MODUS of a process in producing an effect may remain a profound mystery, while the remoter *cause* of such an effect may be satisfactorily demonstrated. And the same observation is applicable to works of art; but more especially to the process and origin of moral good and evil. In reference to these, the precise point of inquiry is, not *how* the mind acquires ideas, becomes the subject of associations, passions, or pursuits, which at best amounts only to probable conjecture, but what is the ULTIMATE SOURCE of the one and the other? The true answer to this inquiry leads, in the most direct manner, to piety, because it leads us to the knowledge of *God* and of *ourselves*.

lieved; but in that case it would be an object of faith, on the evidence of Divine veracity,—not an object of science, on the evidence of first principles. And since the Almighty has not been pleased to make any such communication, we may infer that the knowledge of it is neither necessary nor important. Whatever God has testified, it is our duty to credit firmly, to receive thankfully, and to improve diligently. If, in the Scriptures, He has afforded some account of the mode of creation, it was not to gratify vain curiosity, but more strongly to impress on our minds that He is the adorable source of life and beauty, of power and excellence, of wisdom and goodness. In like manner, if He has given us a revelation of the mode of the entrance of sin into our world, it is not with a design to excite the imagination of the vain and curious speculatist, but to fix more deeply and powerfully the conviction in our hearts, that while He is the source of our happiness, we in our best estate are vanity, having no security for our well-being but in submission to His will; that we are in constant danger of being tempted to sin by subtle adversaries, and even by the bounties of Providence, by our senses, by our imaginations, and by a thirst after unprofitable knowledge; and that the source of our sin and misery is in ourselves. He, assuredly, who best knows his own weakness, is ever the most ready to quit his grasp of a created arm, that he may rely on God, in whom there is "fulness of joy," and "safety from fear of evil." And such, the writer conceives, is the direct tendency of a real knowledge of sin's ultimate source; under the influence of which the soul stands in awe of God's infinite majesty, views His unapproachable excellence with love and admiration, abides with Him as the fountain of life and joy, fears to place its confidence in creatures, the best of whom are but as the fleeting shadow, and rejoices in hope of "the glory that shall be revealed," when intercourse with the Creator will be more intimate and delightful, though not less dependent upon His favour, than in the present state.

Inseparably connected with the preceding steps of inquiry were those views of the Divine character which correspond to the twofold relation of man, who is at once necessitated and free. The questions principally to be ascertained were, What is the true cause of necessitation to good? and, What is the true cause of freedom, or exemption from a decretive necessitation to moral evil? And by observing the same process of investigation,—by first examining

into scriptural positive evidence, and then comparing that evidence with true principles of reason,—it was found, that no other adequate cause could be assigned of necessitation to good but SOVEREIGN BENEVOLENCE, nor any other adequate cause of exemption from decretive necessity but DIVINE EQUITY.

The more strictly and impartially this inquiry was made, the more forcible was the evidence, that to these two causes were all the parts of Ethics and Theology ultimately to be referred. Hence arose the author's determination to attempt a scriptural and rational display of the Equity of Divine Government and the Sovereignty of Divine Grace, and an examination of different systems by the light of these first principles. At first, indeed, the design was to publish a small essay, containing merely the writer's leading ideas; but as he proceeded in arranging his thoughts, the subject seemed to acquire accumulated interest and importance. Accordingly, he formed his plan, and announced his intention of publishing an octavo volume; and, amidst many interruptions from personal and domestic illness, change of situation, and multiplied engagements, he wrote the greatest part of the work at distant intervals. From the commencement of his researches, the author entertained a strong and habitual conviction, that the primary and essential parts of his projected undertaking were not only deduced from, and in harmony with Scripture, but also that they were of the utmost importance towards a satisfactory view of religion in all its bearings: and he was, therefore, not a little anxious to ascertain, whether they would sustain, with equal satisfaction to his own mind, the test of continued experience, in their personal and practical influence; of argument, by means of reflection, conversation, reading, and correspondence; and of prejudice, ever watchful and alert against even the semblance of deviation from long-established modes of thinking. On trial, he found, at least he thought, this last to be the only formidable enemy; while the experiment has afforded him the most satisfactory proof of a warm approbation from persons whose judgment, piety, and usefulness, are highly respected in the religious world. Taking all things, therefore, into account, the delay which occurred in publishing the first edition of this work is far from being a subject of regret; for though efforts have been made, with more zeal than generosity, to represent his views of equity and sovereignty, and some important truths inseparably connected therewith, as an unprofitable specula-

tion, (than which nothing assuredly could be more unfounded,) yet it has at least been the means of preparing the public mind to view the subject with deeper attention,—an attention which, he sincerely hopes, will prove growingly advantageous to the principles he has here undertaken to explain and defend.

After a vigilant regard to the interests of consistent theology for more than thirty years; after constant prayers to God, "the only wise," for direction; after trying the effect of these principles (by a virtual and habitual implication) on the congregations where Providence has called him to officiate in the gospel ministry; after feeling, when apparently on the very borders of an eternal world, that constant and devout meditation on the equity of Divine government and the sovereignty of Divine grace was fraught with unspeakable comfort,—the author resolved to venture his book abroad under the form in which it was first written, (for which he had important reasons, both of a private and public nature, forming more than a counterbalance to any deficiency of verbal ornaments,) with fervent supplications for a blessing to rest on every reader, and with firm and unshaken confidence that the sentiments contained in it are *truths* highly important to be well understood by professing Christians, and especially by theological students and ministers.

It was before intimated that, at various times, some of the leading thoughts discussed in this publication have been submitted to the public. These have called forth the opposition of different writers, for whose extraordinary opinions, and still more extraordinary misrepresentations, it is difficult to account. How could it be reconciled with common candour, to assume a sense of terms which the author had previously disavowed by various and repeated explanations? To triumph in supposed consequences *so* deduced, argued a disingenuous, not to say unmanly, mode of attack, and a disposition not very friendly to the attainment of sacred truth. Had any persons professing themselves the followers of Pelagius produced such publications and criticisms as have recently appeared, in order to counteract the doctrines of sovereign grace, and to exalt the creature's self-sufficiency to secure his own goodness, their denomination would have served as an antidote to those whose sentiments are avowedly opposite. But controversial publications which have no settled explanation of terms,—which do not even pretend to any fixed opinions on the subject

they discuss,—seem but little calculated to cope with the subtle adversaries of evangelical religion. Such works may obtain approbation for a time from unwary readers; but truth is no temporiser. The author, then, would indulge the hope, that the reader of the following pages will not come to the perusal of them prejudiced by uncandid insinuations. Instead of thinking the work sufficiently discredited by the appellation of "a new theological scheme," let him calmly examine whether it be not more properly denominated "a new argument against error," or, "additional evidence for the truth,"—for the good old way so frequently and fiercely spoken against,—for the tenets of the Reformation unadulterated by false philosophy,—in a word, for the doctrine which is according to godliness, opposed alike by the profane profligate, the haughty pharisee, and the conceited sceptic.

The views and resolutions detailed in the preceding paragraphs, it is presumed, might be sufficient to preclude the inference, that a predilection for novelty prompted the publication of this work; the nature of its principles being such, that, in proportion as they are substantiated, they must appear to every reflecting mind of fundamental importance in religion and moral science. A statement, however, of some *specific ends* proposed to be answered by it may be naturally expected, as the value of principles must be estimated from their capability of application to useful purposes. The author, therefore, frankly states that he has in view to counteract the spreading and growing influence of what he considers a false and pernicious moral philosophy,—to exhibit the Divine character in an honourable, amiable, and attractive light,—to reconcile seeming inconsistencies respecting the Divine conduct,—to confirm serious Christians in the radical principles of revealed truth, against the subtleties of scepticism,—and to vindicate the rationality of experimental religion, against the too prevalent charge of enthusiasm.

In the first place, he wishes to counteract the spreading influence of that spurious moral philosophy which ascribes to the active powers of man a strange kind of self-sufficiency, in opposition to the gracious influence of God; and of another, which imputes to the Supreme Being effects which He expressly hates and condemns. The one, in effect, idolises the creature, by assigning to it that which is the sole prerogative of Deity; the other irreverently imposes upon God what be-

longs exclusively to man. The former, which, sanctioned as it is by the respectable names of Reid and Beattie, has insinuated itself so widely into religious opinions, is, in the author's view, neither more nor less than the old Pelagian doctrine under a new-fashioned philosophical appearance. The latter, under the name of "philosophical necessity," countenanced by Hartley, Priestley, and several others, and rendered plausible by the acuteness of its defenders, will be found, on careful examination, to be utterly incompatible with the existence of a moral system of accountability. What the heathens ascribed to fate, *they* ascribe to the designing First Cause, without any discrimination between moral good and evil. Each of these systems maintains, indeed, a part of the truth; but maintaining a part only, each is calculated to promote scepticism and irreligion. That which exalts man above his true standard is the philosophy of conjecture, beyond which it makes no pretensions. The other indeed professes to assign *proofs* in every step of the process, but on principles equally assumed and unfounded. Its πρῶτον ψεῦδος, its radical fallacy, consists in asserting that there is no ground of certainty in the nature of things, but the decretive will of the First Cause,—a doctrine which dishonours the Divine character, subverts a moral system, and stands opposed to demonstrable truth; for that there exists, in the nature of things, a negative principle of certainty respecting evil is a truth which, though entirely overlooked by these philosophers, is no less capable of demonstrative evidence than its counterpart—that there exists, in the nature of things, a positive principle of certainty respecting good. Whichever, therefore, of the schemes in question be adopted,—whether the self-sufficiency of Pelagius, or the necessity of Priestley,—its advocate will have to contend, in a greater or less degree, with the unforced language and uniform tenor of Divine revelation, the consciousness of the humble and benevolent Christian in his most refined and heavenly tempers, the ultimate dictates of common sense, and the legitimate use of right reason. These, however, are adversaries of no feeble prowess; and the man who has them for his associates, has little cause to be apprehensive for the result.

Numbers there are who defend the doctrines of grace by a constant appeal to "chapter and verse;" and they do well. At the same time it will not be pretended that this is the only mode by which truth may be stated and enforced. From the press at

least (though seldom, perhaps, from the pulpit, in a professed manner, before a mixed audience) it is right to meet the enemies of Divine truth, by shewing that their tenets are irrational as well as unscriptural; that when they argue correctly, their principles are false, or that when their principles are admissible, their reasoning is inconclusive. To make use of the term "metaphysics" as a watchword, in order to avoid everything defended by the science, as if faith in the pure gospel were in danger, is a weakness to which a reflecting mind might be expected to rise superior.* If reputed metaphysical writers reproach evangelical religion as an irrational system, it is clearly the more incumbent on its friends, who exult in its unrivalled excellency, though clothed in the simplest dress, to evince that it is perfectly consistent with the first principles of reason, and that the various hypotheses of its opposers cannot stand the test of close investigation. To shrink from inquiry, under such a charge, would be virtually to confess the weakness of our cause,—to confess that faith and sound philosophy, religion and right reason, are incompatible,—to confess, either that we are believers of an irrational creed, or ignorant of its true import. That "science, falsely so called," has been the means of perverting the simple truths of the gospel, is but too evident in every page of ecclesiastical history; but it is also an undeniable fact, that false interpretations of Scripture have corrupted the schools of moral philosophy. The influence, indeed, is reciprocal; defection in the one producing deterioration in the other.

It is unreservedly admitted, that after we have obtained appropriate and adequate evidence of a revelation from God, we ought not first to reason, and then to believe. No; let us first believe

* "I confess the old Popish schoolmen have mingled a number of useless subtleties with this science; they have exhausted their own spirits, and the spirits of their readers, in many laborious and intricate trifles; and some of their writings have been fruitful of names without ideas, which have done much injury to the sacred study of divinity. Upon this account many of the moderns have most unjustly abandoned the whole science at once, and thrown abundance of contempt and raillery upon the very name of *metaphysics;* but this contempt and censure is very unreasonable, for this science, separated from some Aristotelian fooleries and scholastic subtleties, is so necessary to a just conception, solid judgment, and just reasoning on many subjects, that sometimes it is introduced as a part of logic, and not without reason. And those who utterly despise and ridicule it either betray their own ignorance, or will be supposed to make their wit and banter a refuge and excuse for their own laziness."—*Watts's Logic*, part i., chap. vi., sect. 9.

what God asserts, and *because* He asserts it; after which we may endeavour to convince those who question our *interpretation* of Scripture, that we are not deceived in our conclusions. But with the philosophic infidel we have to contend on a different ground. He maintains that what we pronounce to be the genuine sense of revealed declarations is a mistake, *because* it does not comport with rational principles. Let us, then, meet him fairly and manfully; and prove, even on his own shewing, that his objections are futile.

The fashion of decrying metaphysics as useless and dangerous seems to have arisen much about the time that Dr Beattie attacked Mr Hume and other sceptical writers, in his "Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth;" a work in which we are taught to consider common sense (assuming it to be at war with the obnoxious science) as the final test of evidence. The method he adopted was followed by two effects: one was to bring into discredit the writings he opposed,—and a very happy effect it was; while the other unfortunately was of a very different complexion. By calling Hume a metaphysician, he contributed towards forming an association, in the minds of those to whom it is irksome to think closely, between sceptical philosophy and metaphysics; and thus to bring into disrepute a sublime and most useful science. Dr Beattie would have done much greater service to the cause of truth had he represented Mr Hume as an acute wrangler. To reason with subtlety on principles fundamentally false, is the province of the sophist, not of the true philosopher. Perhaps, indeed, there never was a man, of equal parts, less entitled to the honourable appellation of a metaphysician than Mr Hume; and certainly it would be difficult to point out a term in the whole nomenclature of science, in its hackneyed acceptation, so little connected with a clear and distinct idea, and consequently so much abused. If it be what Bacon represents it, *philosophia prima*, the *first philosophy*, in point of eminence,—the science of compatibles and incompatibles, of possibles and impossibles, and, therefore, at the root of all knowledge, insomuch that mathematical science itself is but a branch of it,—who that is wise would think of treating it with scorn? But if, as Dr Beattie insinuates, the science consists in "verbal disputation without precise ideas;" if its aim be "to divest the mind of every principle and of all conviction, and, consequently, to disqualify man for action, and to render him as

useless and wretched as possible;" if it intend "that mode of abstract investigation which is supported by ambiguous and indefinite phraseology, and partial experience, and which seldom fails to lead to such conclusions as contradict matter of fact, or truths of indubitable authority;"—let it be for ever banished into those regions of darkness whose prince is the father of falsehood; or, if it be permitted to occupy any spot of this earth, let it be some SOLITARY CRETE, whose inhabitants are "always liars."

Epithets of eulogy or reproach, though easily invented, do not alter the nature of ideas. If, then, while contemplating the temple of truth, we are assisted by *any* science (the denomination is of little importance) to perceive the grandeur of its design, its majestic simplicity, its admirable proportions, and its exquisite ornaments,—if, too, while viewing the temple of error, we are enabled by the same assistance to detect the insecurity of its foundation, the weakness of its pillars, and its disgusting want of symmetry, ill atoned for by the gaudy and capricious embellishment,—to speak contemptuously of such aid would be a mark of ignorance and folly, and to cultivate acquaintance with it worthy of the purest wisdom.

A second design of this work is, to exhibit the glory of the DIVINE CHARACTER, particularly in the condemnation of the finally impenitent and the salvation of the faithful. These effects, though they have a distinguished prominence in the inspired pages, are too often regarded as proceeding from arbitrary will, without distinction. It is intended to shew that, while salvation from sin and happiness in heaven flow from sovereign pleasure, the condemnation of the disobedient proceeds from the Divine *nature*. The cause of condemnation is in and from the sinner himself. To every wicked character God's holy nature in exercise is of *necessity* opposed. For the Deity not to condemn such a character, would be to renounce the glory of His own holy nature. Sooner might the moth rush unharmed into the dazzling flame, than an impenitent transgressor not be consumed, as to his well-being, by the Divine holiness and justice. God will by no means clear the guilty. A reverse of sentence must be founded in a change of character.

A third design is, to reconcile seeming inconsistencies respecting the Divine conduct. It is an evident fact that God permits (or does not hinder) the event of sin; and it is equally evident that

He hates and condemns it. Since the prevention of sin implies no contradiction, it is indubitable that God *could* prevent its occurrence when He *does not*. The more depraved any rational being is, the more impotent and helpless is he in a moral sense, and therefore the less qualified to render obedience ; while, at the same time, there is no exemption from required obedience, nor is there, in the Divine conduct, any diminution of claim on account of such imbecility. Again, the Scriptures declare that God "wills all to be saved ; " and yet, in fact, all are not saved ; while at the same time He could save those who are lost, Moreover, whatever God effects in time, He must always have purposed to effect, even from eternity ; this implies an unalterable decree of the event ; and yet man is free in his agency, neither constrained to evil, nor restrained from good in his accountable actions : so that the latter idea seems to admit a sort of contingency ; while the former evidently involves a fixed certainty. These are some of the difficulties proposed to be solved by the view of Divine equity and sovereignty hereafter exhibited.

Another intention of this work is, to establish believing Christians in the leading principles of revealed truth, by exposing those which are false, and bringing them to a legitimate test. The method often adopted, of shewing that equal difficulties recoil on an objector, appears by no means convincing and satisfactory. From the mere circumstance that another is wrong, no one can fairly conclude that he himself is right ; since without positive proof to the contrary, both may be wrong—

" unus utrique
Error sed variis illudit partibus."

Doubtless, for an objector to urge a difficulty which equally presses upon himself is impertinent ; but to expose his impertinence is not to solve his difficulties. By proving, for instance, in the most satisfactory manner, that a self-determining power in the will is an absurdity, without shewing the ground of the fallacy, and where the truth lies, you only erect a mound to stop the progress of error, which, unless diverted into the channel of truth, will continue to accumulate until it rush forth with greater violence. To substantiate the charge of error, therefore, is not enough. We should further shew its radical principle, and how it may be rectified, or the inquirer is either left exposed to the snares of scepticism, or is strengthened in the fortress of his prejudices.

Most mistakes in religion may be traced to wrong apprehensions of God's moral government and sovereign prerogative. An erroneous theological system may be compared to a diseased human body. One distemper may emaciate and consume it, another swell it to a disproportioned size; by one it may be enervated, by another inflamed: but all disorders, however opposite in their immediate causes, or diversified in their symptoms, tend to the same point—the destruction of the frame. So it is in matters of religion. Perhaps there never was a heresy that did not rise from an apprehension of some truth, which by degrees was exalted to a fantastic importance, at the expense of other truths that were overlooked. And the most dangerous errors have been those which magnified the *circumstantials* at the cost of the *essentials* of religion,—which aggravated enormously points of small moment, while others of the greatest were disregarded, until at length the symmetry of the whole was entirely destroyed. Hence, for instance, the gratuitous assumption and dreadful extension of tyrannical power, and the almost fiendish energies of persecution, under a pretence of defending and preserving *uniformity in religion.* But, not to dwell on these odious excesses, how deeply is it to be lamented, that some, whose principles were incomparably more important, have, on the one hand, maintained the honours of Divine grace by casting into the shade the glories of Divine government; while others, on the contrary, have contended for the honours of Divine legislation and government in such a manner as to draw a dark veil over the glories of sovereign grace! In this essay it is attempted to guard against these extremes, and to display each of these grand truths according to the beautiful proportion maintained in the sacred oracles; and in the degree this is accomplished, the believing Christian will have additional grounds of attachment to the Holy Scriptures, and to the fundamental principles they contain.

In the last place, it is one specific design of this essay to vindicate what is very properly called EXPERIMENTAL CHRISTIANITY from unmerited slander and reproach. In every age of the Christian Church its best members have been objects of scorn and slander to the sons of folly; and in the present day there are not a few who exert their utmost efforts to render their obloquies *fashionable.* Provided they can accomplish their end, they are not very scrupulous about the means; ridicule or intolerance, it amounts to the same thing, so that the enthusiasts can be "caught and crushed."

The man who presumes to talk about an "experience" of the scriptural effects of Divine truth on the heart and life, on the conscience and affections, must in the nature of things be either a bad subject or a raving maniac, and ought, accordingly, to be consigned to a prison or an asylum. Now, though to reason *with* such characters is next to hopeless, yet to reason *against* them, and to expose their absurdity, may be of advantage to the cause of truth and virtue.

"Wisdom is justified of her children." In proportion as the Christian who "is clothed with humility," with whom "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding," examines the fundamental principles of the religion he professes, the greater will be his inducement to admire it, and to cultivate an experience of its efficacy. It is hoped that the leading views developed in this publication will contribute to endear to him a humble and resigned temper of mind, a habit of devotion and "fellowship with the Father and the Son," a life of faith and love, zeal and exertion in every good cause; that he will find the ways of wisdom more pleasant, and her paths more peaceful; that his attachment to redeeming grace will be stronger, and his obedience more uniform and circumspect. He may perceive that Christian experience is the most reasonable thing in the world, and that it cannot be rejected as the unmeaning cant of a party without abandoning religion itself, and the eternal difference between the adorable Creator and His dependent creatures. He will see the truest wisdom exemplified in one "who trembles at the word of the Lord," and who is prostrate in spirit at His throne, adoring His infinite majesty, adhering to and delighting in His matchless excellence, confiding in His veracity and faithfulness, and rejoicing in hope of the heavenly inheritance. And so far will this experience be from rendering him an unprofitable recluse, that it will better qualify him for useful, active service in the situation allotted him by Providence, and render him more promptly "ready to every good work."

CHAPTER I.

SOME PREPARATORY OBSERVATIONS ON DIFFICULTIES TO BE SURMOUNTED, AND ON THE NATURE AND USE OF SCRIPTURE AUTHORITY AND EVIDENCE.

SECTION I.

On Difficulties to be Surmounted.

THERE has existed but a small number of human characters who have denied that they were the subjects of *moral obligation;* and, indeed, how can any person reflect seriously without admitting the solemn fact? If *man* be not such a subject,—an accountable creature, originally and constantly designed to render voluntary homage to the will of God,—we have no evidence that any being in the universe *can* be morally obliged. But to maintain such a consequence is to move, with unhallowed steps, to the gloomy regions of atheism. For it seems impossible that any one should either prove, or believe on just grounds, the existence of a First Cause, without admitting, on the same grounds, his own obligations to obey Him. His possessing powers to produce this evidence, in connexion with his conscious freedom, would be unimpeachable witnesses against his denial. The separate and united verdict of conscience, of reason, and of revelation, in evidence of this point, being so universally acknowledged as decisive, renders a particular discussion of it, in this place, unnecessary. What is its proper nature, and the foundation on which it rests, will be explained in a subsequent part of the work.

But if man be a subject of moral obligation, it is requisite he should be *free* in his moral actions. We cannot say that any being is morally obliged, but on condition that he is formed to act freely

according to his pleasure, without being constrained in his wrong, and restrained in his right choice; the limits of his freedom, to act as he pleases, being the limits of his obligations. Again, to say that man has not a *physical power* to act according to his volitions, is the same in effect as to say, he is not obliged so to act. Thus it is clear, if man have not liberty, or be destitute of physical power, to love and serve God according to his conviction, he is not to be blamed for not performing those actions. We should remark, however, that when any choice is contrary to *rectitude*, or inconsistent with it, whether the object be attainable or unattainable, freedom is abused. For though we are not obliged to perform what is physically impossible, any more than what is morally improper, yet any *volition* of a moral agent which is not according to rectitude is morally *evil*.

Of the existence of this freedom, or liberty of choice, every thinking person has the evidence of consciousness and reiterated experience. From these sources, notwithstanding the efforts of scepticism to prove that his liberty is an illusion, he is assured that he is free in all his moral actions. He finds, as the result of his maturest reflection, that his *accountableness* to the Supreme Governor is not only the inseparable adjunct, but also the necessary *effect*, of liberty properly so called. I said, liberty *properly* so called; for it should not be confounded with mere spontaneity, as observed in brutes. The character of *will*, indeed, is somewhat similar in all beings; but human liberty and brutal spontaneity are not only essentially different, but directly opposite. The latter is a physical impulse, according to established laws; but the former is *exemption* from physical impulse. Hence the one class of beings is capable of morality and accountableness, while the other is incapable.

Nevertheless, however absolute the character of human liberty, as before admitted, by ascribing to God the attribute of perfect *wisdom*, we exclude *chance* out of the universe. The one is light, the other is darkness; and where pure and perfect light pervades all, in the same proportion darkness is excluded. Seeing, therefore, the almighty Sovereign of the universe is infinitely wise, every created entity, whether being or action, which could not exist but by His will, must be the effect of unfrustrable design. Besides, not only whatever takes place in time must be foreseen by Omniscience, but also whatever has an efficient cause must be the effect

of Omnipotence. Hence the predetermination of all entity in human actions.

We observe in the world around us, independently of the evidence formed by testimony, numerous instances of *evil;* and many signal displays are made of wisdom and beneficence, power and grace, which could not be exhibited without the prior occurrence of moral failure. This is abundantly evident from the plan of redeeming mercy, and that illustrious effect of Divine benevolence, the gospel dispensation. But is evil a necessary instrument in order to produce good? If it be, what then becomes of the Divine holiness, that should employ such means; of the Divine wisdom and power, that should require them; and of the Divine goodness and equity, that should leave accountable creatures to their influence? These considerations imply no small difficulties to be surmounted.

Hence, to reconcile the occurrence of moral evil with the acknowledged perfections of Deity,—the irreversible Divine decrees with human liberty,—or, which involves the same result, to determine (*πόθεν τὸ κακὸν*) *whence comes evil,* has been in every age, more or less, the "great cross of theologues," and the desideratum of moral philosophers. Origen properly observes, that "if there be anything in human affairs, proposed to examination, which our nature finds difficult to investigate and comprehend, it is the *origin of evil.*"* And this, in effect, has been the language of most persons who have closely thought upon the subject. Yet, it must be acknowledged, that few have considered the *importance* of ascertaining this point, in order to subserve the cause of moral science, of true virtue, and of religion. They seem to have regarded it as a question of mere speculation, which, if satisfactorily answered, would be applicable to no useful purpose either in religion or morals; and, assuming this opinion, it must have appeared a part of Christian wisdom to protest against the attempt. But if the opinion be founded in error, if so far from involving a criminal waste of time, the investigation itself, on right principles, lead directly to pious exercises of mind, to a sublimer knowledge of God, and a more intimate acquaintance with ourselves; and if the very mode of inquiry stand nearly connected with the fundamental principles of revealed religion, and with the very temper which Christianity inspires, the question assumes another aspect, and is indeed essentially different.

* Orig. Contra Celsum, lib. iv.

As forming a suitable part of my design, I shall present the reader with a few extracts, which exhibit in a striking manner the difficulties of this part of our subject, and with what disposition it should be studied. Of all the passages I have met with in human writings, calculated at once to check presumption, and to direct the mind to the most profitable improvement of the humbling difficulty, a lecture addressed by Archbishop Leighton to the students in divinity, in the public hall of the University of Edinburgh, has made the deepest impression on my mind. After some remarks on the Divine prescience, intention, counsels, fixed determination, and wisdom, and on the presumption of endeavouring to break into the sacred repositories of heaven, he observes:—"They always seemed to me to act a very ridiculous part who contend that the effect of the Divine decree is *absolutely irreconcilable* with human liberty. But, in a word, the GREAT DIFFICULTY in all this dispute is, that with regard to the *origin of evil.* Some distinguish, and justly, the substance of the action, as you call it, or that which is physical in the action, from the morality of it. This is of some weight; but whether it takes away the *whole* difficulty, I will not pretend to say. Believe me, young gentlemen, it is an abyss,—it is an abyss *never to be perfectly fathomed* by any plummet of human understanding. Wherefore, if you will take my advice, withdraw your minds from a *curious search* into this mystery, and turn them *directly* to the *study of piety*, and a due reverence to the awful majesty of God. Think and speak of God and His *secrets* with fear and trembling, but *dispute very little* about them; and, if you would not undo yourselves, *beware of disputing with Him:* if you *transgress* in anything, *blame* YOURSELVES; if you do *any good,* offer *thanksgiving to* GOD. This is what I earnestly recommend to you; in this I acquiesce myself; and to this, when much tossed and distressed with doubt and difficulties, I had recourse as to a safe harbour." *

After attentive perusals, and a repeated consideration of this address, I was at a loss, for a while, whether I should advance in my inquiries concerning Divine equity and sovereignty and the subjects which they involve. Proceeding from a mind so enlarged by reading and reflection, and so remarkably devout, the lecturer's advice to his pupils, "to dispute very little" about these mysteries, and to "turn their minds directly to the study of piety," amounted

* Leighton's Theological Lectures, lect. x.

with me to almost a prohibition from making any further efforts. By degrees, however, I perceived that the author, in common with his predecessors, had assumed some hasty notions respecting the subject itself and the mode of its investigation. He seems to take for granted, in the outset, that a close attention to this mystery is inseparable from a "curious search;" whereas this can only be affirmed, when the investigation is made on wrong principles, or with improper views. A bold and presumptuous curiosity is dangerous at all times, whatever Divine theme be the object of inquiry. He seems to think, again, that to turn the mind "directly to the study of piety, and a due reverence to the awful majesty of God," is to turn it away from the point in question. Now, in reality, the more direct our attention is to piety and holy reverence, the greater is the probability of success in discovering the true source of any subject that relates immediately to God and ourselves; and we might as well pretend that a scriptural knowledge of these objects is incompatible with practical religion, as that a legitimate investigation of the origin of evil is inconsistent with a direct study of piety and reverence towards God. We may remark further, that this amiable man had made near approaches towards the solution of those difficulties which he states, by the very method he recommends; and by which, as he declares, he found "a safe harbour," after being "much tossed and distressed with doubt and difficulties." "If you transgress in anything, blame YOURSELVES; if you do any good, offer thanksgiving to GOD." Every one must perceive that this is to turn the mind "directly to the study of piety;" but then it is no less the direct road to a discovery of the origin of evil. Viewing the subject, therefore, in this light, my former hesitation was converted into a stronger hope of success; and instead of abandoning the original design, I only determined to be doubly cautious in the prosecution of it; to avoid all rash curiosity in my researches into subjects confessedly awful; and, above all, to "beware of disputing against God."

But the most formidable difficulty, as it presented itself to the view of Archbishop Leighton, still remains to be noticed:—"Believe me, young gentlemen, it is an abyss,—*it is an abyss never to be perfectly fathomed* by any plummet of human understanding." The sentiment of this proposition is rather ambiguous. If by "perfectly fathomed" be meant, that some things *relating* to the

origin of evil, some *ends* to be answered by its *permission*, some instances of its being overruled for good, &c., are not to be fully comprehended by a human mind, it may well be admitted: the same declaration may be predicated of our own minds and faculties, of our bodies, of every animal that moves, of every plant that vegetates, and of every particle of matter that exists. But because we do not know everything, does it follow that we know nothing? There are some things, relative to these objects, of which, unquestionably, we have a clear idea; and the proposition asserting that clear idea may be pronounced "perfectly fathomed," as in mathematical and demonstrative conclusions. Moreover, as many things in natural philosophy are ascertained to the utmost certainty, which appeared to the ancients perfectly "unfathomable," what good reason can be assigned that *moral* science has reached its highest elevation? Or why should we conclude that no additional evidence is attainable respecting the contents of Scripture, the Divine dispensations, government, or grace? Though a blade of grass, or a grain of sand, may have *some* inscrutable properties, that is no evidence why *all* properties of matter, or *all* the laws of motion, should be so. How common has been the persuasion that the origin of water, the cause of lightning, &c., were inexplicable! and how many, after their most laborious investigations, have concluded that the true motion and uniform laws of the solar system were not to be ascertained by mortals!

Highly as I venerate the character and esteem the writings of Archbishop Leighton, I cannot approve the spirit of his assertion, as it evidently tends to check the progress of moral science, and affords a plausible occasion to scepticism, though nothing doubtless was more distant from his intention. In the view of a sceptic, the assertion implies that sin *has no* discoverable origin, and consequently, that probably there is no ultimate cause of evil in the universe! Nor is it any part of humility to make our attainments the standard beyond which another must not hope to succeed. He who would *consistently* advance the sentiment, that a clear knowledge of a given subject is not attainable, ought to have it in his power to shew that such an attainment implies contradictory ideas. But who ever attempted to shew that the supposition of a right and clear knowledge of the origin of evil is of that character? The proposition which asserts the discovery of a perpetual motion deserves no credit, and it may be fairly pronounced unat-

tainable. But why? Not because many ingenious persons have failed in the attempt, but because it is utterly at variance with the existing laws of nature.

All will admit that self-knowledge is attainable in *some* degree, and that it is a part of true wisdom to improve it. Now, what part of this knowledge is more important than that of our *good* and *evil?* And what kind of knowledge is more excellent than that which implies an acquaintance with effects in their true causes? What, indeed, is philosophy without this? A thousand phenomena are observed by the young child and the hoary philosopher, with an equal perfection of sense; but the former merely observes, while the latter is acquainted with the causes and the uses of these effects. To know the source of our good, it is plain, is essential to true religion; and can it, then, be uninteresting or useless to know whether our *evil* be from ourselves, or from some other origin? Is it a question of unprofitable tendency, a mere speculation inapplicable to moral and religious uses, whether moral evil be from our Maker, or from ourselves, without His causation? If, however, it originate in ourselves, there seems to be no reason for pretending that a clear, a satisfactory, a demonstrative idea of this part of self-knowledge is unattainable; and if the knowledge of an interesting object be attainable, by what authority are we forbidden to inquire after it? "Let the hope of new discoveries," says Dr Watts, "as well as the satisfaction and pleasure of known truths, animate your daily industry. Do not think that learning in general is arrived at its perfection, or that the knowledge of any particular subject in any science cannot be improved, merely because it has lain five hundred or a thousand years without improvement. Nor should a student in divinity imagine that our age is arrived at a full understanding of everything which can be known by the Scriptures. Since there are at present many difficulties and darknesses hanging about certain truths of the Christian religion, and since several of these relate to important doctrines,—such as the *origin of sin*, the fall of Adam, the person of Christ, the blessed Trinity, and the *decrees of God*, &c.,—which do still embarrass the minds of honest and inquiring readers, and which make work for noisy controversy, it is certain there are several things in the Bible yet unknown, and not sufficiently explained; and *it is certain that there is some way to solve these difficulties, and to reconcile these seeming contradictions.* And why may not

a sincere searcher of truth in the present age, by labour, diligence, study, and prayer, with the best use of his reasoning powers, find out the *proper solution* of those knots and perplexities which hitherto have been unsolved, and which have afforded matter of angry quarrelling? Happy is every man who shall be favoured of Heaven to give a helping hand towards that introduction of the blessed age of light and love!" *

Among many other passages expressive of the difficulties to be surmounted, which have occurred in the course of my reading, there is one more, which I beg leave to present to the reader, extracted from a very celebrated author—the learned, the penetrating, the sublime Saurin:—"The questions, concerning the *decrees of God*," says he, "are so abstruse, that in all ages of the Church, and particularly since the schism of Pelagius, divines orthodox and heterodox have employed all their efforts to give us a system free from difficulties, and they have *all failed in their designs.* The subject is *beyond the reach of the human mind.*" After discarding the system of Socinus and his followers, which tends, not to elucidate, but to subvert religion; after rejecting the system of Arminius, which grants foreknowledge, but denies fore-appoint-

* Watts's Improvement of the Mind, chap. i., § 7.

Nearly to the same effect are these remarks of Bishop Butler:—"One might go on to add, that there is a great resemblance between the light of nature and of revelation in several other respects. Practical Christianity, or that faith and behaviour which renders a man a Christian, is a plain and obvious thing, like the common rules of conduct with respect to our ordinary temporal affairs. The more distinct and particular knowledge of those things, the study of which the apostle calls 'going on unto perfection,'—like many parts of natural, and even civil knowledge,—may require very exact thought and careful consideration. The hindrances, too, of natural and of supernatural light and knowledge have been of the same kind. And, as it is owned the whole scheme of Scripture is not yet understood; so, if it ever comes to be understood, before the 'restitution of all things,' and without miraculous interpositions, it must be in the same way as natural knowledge is come at: by the continuance and progress of learning and of liberty; and by particular persons attending to, comparing, and pursuing intimations scattered up and down it, which are overlooked and disregarded by the generality of the world. For this is the way in which all improvements are made, by thoughtful men tracing on obscure hints, as it were, dropped us by nature accidentally, or which seem to come into our minds by chance. Nor is it at all incredible that a book which has been so long in the possession of mankind should contain many truths as yet undiscovered; for all the same phenomena, and the same faculties of investigation, from which great discoveries in natural knowledge have been made in the present and last age, were equally in the possession of mankind several thousand years before."—*Butler's Analogy*, p. 212, Edit. 1802.

ment, and stating that it is inconsistent with itself, that it does not coalesce with Scripture, that it does not lessen the difficulties, by casting any light on the ways of Providence, by filling up any of the depths which absorb our imperfect reason, and, in a word, is subject to the very *same* perplexities as that of predestination,—the author, in the meantime, conceding *to* (shall I say?) or urging *against* the Arminian system, that "to *foresee* and to *fore-appoint* in God is only *one and the same thing;*" after renouncing the system of the Supralapsarians, which, according to him, states, that God resolved to punish such and such persons, not because He foresaw they would sin, but He resolved that they should sin that He might damn them;—after discrediting all these systems, and explaining in a few words that of the Reformed Churches, he proposes a number of questions against the doctrine of *predestination* as commonly espoused, and answers them by an appeal to some passages of Scripture, in the usual way. He then proceeds:—"After all these questions, should you appeal to our consciences to know whether our own answers *fully satisfy ourselves,*—whether our arguments may not be *turned against us,*—whether the objections we have made against others *do not seem to conclude against ourselves,*—and whether the system we have proposed to you appear to ourselves *free from difficulty,*—to this we reply by putting our finger upon our mouth: *we acknowledge our ignorance. The decree is impenetrable.* The book of life is sealed. A little less *speculation,* and more practice. Let us become less *curious,* and try to be more holy. Let us leave God to *arrange His own decrees,* and for our parts let us arrange our actions, and regulate our lives. This subject addresses itself to you, *rash* divine, you who perplex your mind by trying to comprehend *incomprehensible* truths; to you whose *audacious* disposition obliges you to run into one of these two extremes—either to embrace error, or *to render truth doubtful* by the *manner of explaining* it. For understand, my brethren, the man who rejects a truth *because* he cannot comprehend it, and he who would fully comprehend *before* he receives it, both sin from the same principle; neither understands the limits of the human mind. These two extremes are alike dangerous. Certainly, on the one hand, we must be very rash, we must entertain very diminutive ideas of an infinite God, we must be very little versed in science, to admit only principles which have no difficulty, and to regard the depth of a subject as a

character of falsehood. What! a miserable creature, an ignorant creature, a creature that doth not know itself, would know the decrees of God, and reject them if they be unfathomable! But, on the other hand, we must have very narrow views, we must have a very weak mind, we must know very little of the designs of God, not to feel any difficulty, to find everything clear, not to *suspend* our judgment upon *anything*, to pretend not only to perceive the *truth* of a mystery, but to go to the *bottom* of it. Insignificant man! feel thy diminutiveness. Cover thyself with dust, and learn of the greatest of divines to stop where you ought to stop, and to cry on the brink of the ocean, '*O the depth!*'" *

I was induced to transcribe these passages, both as they are calculated to operate as a useful caution to myself, and to admonish my readers that if they do not find all their doubts and scruples removed in the following pages, respecting some "*adorable depths*," they may be prepared to make due allowances. And happy will it be for the author and the reader, when a consciousness of ignorance, and of the limits assigned to the human understanding, conducts to devout adoration! This is true wisdom. From the very ruins of our nature, by adopting such a method, we are enabled to educe profit, and to apply to the best advantage the most humiliating considerations. He who thus "humbleth himself shall be exalted." By feeling and confessing before God our nothingness, an ascending step is gained in religious proficiency; and without such a temper of mind no one can have an experimental pledge of his ever attaining the perfection of his nature.

On the quotations from Saurin many observations might be made in evidence that he was not a little embarrassed in consequence of some erroneous assumptions, and from his confounding the difficulty of ascertaining *à priori* the *order* of Divine decrees with their ascertainable *objects*, by reasoning *à posteriori*. The question whether moral evils be *objects* of Divine decrees, is of a nature essentially different from an inquiry into the *order* of the Divine decrees; with which, however, the persons whom he deemed reprehensible almost exclusively, and very unprofitably, perplexed themselves and others. This last being the general question agitated by "orthodox and heterodox divines, it is no wonder that they should have all failed in their designs," and that

* Saurin's Sermons, vol. v., ser. xi.

the subject should be pronounced "beyond the reach of the human mind." And while the author (with the common body of his Reformed brethren) maintained that "to foresee and to fore-appoint in God is only one and the same thing," it would, indeed, be matter of surprise if their own solutions of certain questions should "fully satisfy themselves." On that supposition, assuredly, their answers might be "turned against themselves," and there was good reason why the author should confess in their name, "we acknowledge our ignorance—the decree is impenetrable." For "insignificant man" to attempt a definitive "arrangement of the Divine decrees," may be well pronounced "rash" and "audacious." Similar observations might be made, were it needful, on other parts of the quotations. The sentiment, however, before adverted to must not be passed over without further notice, because it appears to lie at the root of the difficulties he suggests, and because it stands immediately connected with my present design.

"To *foresee* and to *fore-appoint* in God is only one and the same thing." This assertion, equally bold and unguarded, appears to me but little short of an open violation of the cautions which the author zealously recommends. At any rate, it shews plainly that his mind was greatly perplexed on the subjects of prescience and decree, and on the mode of reconciling them,—a remark which may be extended to Archbishop Leighton, as appears from several expressions contained in the above-cited lecture. And, indeed, they both uttered a language very much in vogue, even among the orthodox, and which was readily espoused by their opponents as their strongest objection against the Reformed doctrine of predestination. This assumption lying as an insurmountable difficulty in their way, and forming an impregnable barrier against clear and distinct ideas, whereby their own minds might be satisfied, was, doubtless, the reason why they spoke so strongly in dissuading others from such investigations. If, indeed, they assumed that there is no medium between *decretive intention* and *chance* in any event whatever, it is not difficult to perceive why they shuddered at the consequence of prosecuting the inquiry. Excellent and illustrious as these men were in other respects, it does not appear that their views on this topic were either consistent or satisfactory to themselves.

On entering a dark passage we step fearfully, and inculcate

caution on those who follow us; but if light be admitted, we walk forward with confidence and pleasure. Thus when the mind is enabled satisfactorily to perceive that the GOOD in the created universe is foreseen because divinely *purposed*, and, with equal evidence, that the EVIL is foreseen in a negative principle as an adequate cause of *defectibility*, and therefore cannot be an object of decree, although under the infinitely wise direction and control of Divine benevolence,—when the mind is thus enlightened, all ground of alarm is removed, chance is out of the question, and the character of God appears in a light so amiable as to afford a rational confidence and inexpressible delight. The supposition that the CAUSE of *liability* to moral evil is positive, or the effect of decree, energy, or efficiency, is demonstrably an incompatible idea; and it is equally plain (as will be shewn in its proper place) that no decree is *capable* of preventing a negative cause from being *essentially related* to a limited existence; so that a decree cannot be necessary in order to account for a limited and defective mode of operation. But moral evil, it can be shewn, is a defective mode of operation by a being of limited existence; therefore moral evil, in all possible degrees, may be foreseen without being fore-appointed. To decree an event, or the manner of an event, is to assign it a positive and effective cause; but moral evil, it may be proved, is a NEGATIVE or DEFECTIVE MANNER of operation; therefore, while the operation itself is decreed, its *defective* manner no more requires a decree, than the *limitation* by which it is occasioned. And this limitation of a created nature, which is not the effect of *will*, as may be abundantly substantiated, is necessarily involved in the demonstration of *one infinite First Cause*. As sure as this grand principle is true, every other nature *must* be limited. Had Saurin paid due attention to this radical subject, he could never have asserted, in his indiscriminate manner, that "to foresee and to fore-appoint in God is one and the same thing," and thereby afforded a plausible argument to all objectors against both predestination and all Divine decrees, on account of the horrible consequences implicated in His assertion.

And now, before I launch with my small bark into this sea of difficulties, where so many dangerous rocks abound on which greater and stronger vessels than mine have been wrecked, I would make a solemn pause, and for a few moments indulge that disposition to which all theological and moral investigations ought

to be subservient. Contemplating the blessed God, I behold an ocean unfathomable and without shore! But what is man? "Canst thou," worm of the earth, "by searching find out God?" "Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" a perfection "high as heaven; what canst thou do?" a perfection "deeper than hell; what canst thou know? There is no searching of His understanding." It is no wonder that my conceptions of an Infinite Spirit, and of His transcendent properties, should be inadequate; for it is but a "small portion of His ways" I can understand. And if His *ways* are "past finding out," if His expressed judgments are unsearchable, what must be His secret counsels? "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things. To whom be glory for ever."

Yet, "that the soul be *without knowledge*, it is not good." I am told, as the language of encouragement from the Great Supreme, that "a wise man will increase learning;" and that "a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels." Ought I then to exclude myself from being interested in the benevolent address from heaven?—"My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and *find the knowledge of God.* For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou *understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.*" I am assured by an infallible oracle of truth and wisdom, that to "*know* the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, is *life eternal.*" His children are authorised to hope for "an unction from the Holy One," that they may know the indications of His will. Those who *go on to fear the Lord* may hope to be favoured with a secret unknown to others; and He has promised to *shew them His covenant.**

Why am I endowed with intellect and reason, if not for the

* Psalm xxv. 14.

purpose of contemplating, with attention and reverence, the glorious nature and perfections of my Maker, the wonderful works of His goodness, wisdom, and power, the sublime movements of His providence, and the sublimer operations of His grace? How shall I *intelligently* adore, and love, and serve that God, of whose equity as a Governor, and of whose prerogative as a Benefactor, I have no settled conceptions? This I clearly understand—that my Creator, the self-existent, independent, and omnipotent First Cause, is ALL, and that I am as NOTHING. On this condition alone can I hope for blissful existence—that I consider myself as nothing and vanity in His presence. The moment I begin to apprehend myself to be something *without* Him, I stand condemned. Let me, then, for a few minutes of that "vain life which passeth as a shadow," withdraw from created scenes, adore in solemn silence, and be wholly absorbed in the greatness of my Creator. No mental state can be more productive of real enjoyment than this kind of self-annihilation, or more conformable to eternal rectitude and reason; only Divine grace can subdue the swellings and proud boastings of the human heart. When the creature claims any power, whether of the will or of any other faculty, to do the least *good*, without the aid of Him who said, "Without me ye can do nothing," he elevates an *idol*, and presents it with incense. This idol is *self*. O vanity! O nothing! how blind art thou to thy nature! Thou canst no more act well without GOD, in proud disdain of His aid, than thou canst form a living body, or create an active soul. What good do I possess with which He did not furnish me? Or what good have I done to which He did not prompt, and in which He did not assist me? O my Creator, Saviour, and Sanctifier, preserve me from the evil to which every human being is liable, but from which, by gracious influence, Thou canst effectually defend me! I beseech Thee, O thou God of truth, suffer no falsehood of any kind to drop from my pen to Thy dishonour, whilst, after the example of Thy faithful servants in former periods, I attempt to disprove the impious accusation, and to remove the foul calumny, which are virtually uttered by too many:—"If God has decreed to bestow *more grace* upon one than upon another, *His ways are not equal;* if we have no sufficient power, without His influence, to convert ourselves, *why doth He yet find fault?*" Let this effort, sincerely intended, however weak, stand as a monument for God, to testify against the self-idolatry of every creature.

Section II.

Concerning the Nature and Use of Scriptural Authority, and of Scriptural Evidence.

The whole body of modern Jews—excepting, perhaps, some deistic or atheistic individuals who have not renounced the name, but still preposterously glory in their descent from Abraham—acknowledge, as their forefathers for many ages have done, the binding authority of oral traditions derived from Moses. These were committed to writing by learned Rabbins, and under the term *Mischna* are contained in the *Talmuds* of Jerusalem and of Babylon, accompanied with a *Gemara*, or supplemental commentary, which completes the system. In their estimation, compared with the Old Testament, those most absurd of all compositions are of paramount authority. By these traditional chains the Rabbins keep their deluded votaries in the most abject slavery through successive generations; while texts of Scripture, however appropriate and pointed, and the most fair and conclusive deductions from them, are annihilated in their view by any gloss, however ridiculous, produced as the tradition of their ancestors. The *dictum* of a "Rabbi" goes much further with them than the testimony of Moses or the prophets, and thus they "transgress the commandment of God," and, as far as they are able, "make it of no effect."

But it is a lamentable fact, that a large proportion of persons in the visible Church of Christ closely imitate the example of the Jews in this respect. The Church of Rome, in particular, confides in traditions as of equal authority with the inspired volume, and assumes that Christians are under the highest obligation to observe them. They have not, indeed, collected these fragments into a regular system like the Jewish Talmuds, but they assert that their Church is in possession of laws and customs, doctrines and directions, not, indeed, contained in the Bible, but derived from the apostles by uninterrupted succession; and they further pretend, that of these apostolical traditions they are, exclusively, the appointed depositaries. Besides, they produce *ecclesiastical* traditions, consisting of canons and statutes, or the laws, regulations, and

decrees of councils, the mandates of the Popes, &c., as objects of no small veneration. Some of their traditions are sought from the writings of the sainted fathers of the Church, though not found in the Scriptures, and others are unwritten, but preserved by the Roman Church inviolate: but all of them, they maintain, are binding upon the consciences of men, and to disregard them, as enjoined by the Church, is to forfeit salvation.

If it be asked, how are the ignorant and illiterate to be made acquainted with so huge a mass of learned lumber, the knowledge of which however must be obtained, under pain of exclusion from the favour and family of God; the answer is, they commit the care of their souls and their eternal salvation to the priests, who undertake to acquaint them with everything needful both in the Scriptures and the traditions. Submission to *their* authority is the same as submission to that of the Church, councils, and Popes; which, again, is the same as the authority of God. The way, therefore, to avoid everlasting damnation, according to them, is to yield implicitly to the direction of the priest, who has at once "the key of knowledge" and of heaven. It is of no moment what our consciences, our senses, our reason, or the inspired Scriptures, declare to the contrary, the priest is authorised by the Church, and the Church *cannot* err. As God gave to Christ authority over men, so Christ communicated to St Peter authority over the Church; and as St Peter transmitted his prerogative to the first Bishop of Rome, so the first Bishop of Rome transmitted it to his successors in office to the end of time. The Roman Pontiff, therefore, is infallible; and infallible are all the ecclesiastical councils which he sanctions, and all the mandates which he issues. And as he is the head of the Church, every member of it is as sure of ultimate felicity as himself. But out of the Church there is no salvation; all others are heretics, doomed to perdition, because they will not submit to the authority of the Church, that is, of God.

Monstrous and absurd, however, as this ecclesiastical system appears to the view of a Protestant, in connexion with its horrid abuses; yet, abstracted from these abuses, there is something plausible in the scheme. IF God, who is the ultimate source of authority, has delegated this to the Church, and the Church to the priest, to disobey the priest is to rebel against God; and how can such rebels be saved? This enormous pile of consequences they affect to found on express passages of Scripture; not, indeed,

upon the spirit, but upon the letter of them. A few verbal criticisms, in defiance of common sense and right reason, a few traditionary maxims, however preposterous and unfounded, serve as a basis for the whole hierarchy. To question, or even to examine these claims, is heresy; and so is every interpretation of Scripture not authorised by the Church. Never was a scheme, detached from its hideous abuses, more imposingly congenial to degraded nature, or more effectual to precipitate human minds into ignorance, superstition, and misery. Had these ecclesiastical tyrants preserved the bounds of even a selfish policy, few of the Reformers, perhaps, would have suspected the authority itself. Had it been employed to promote order and piety, they could have endured it; they could have allowed the foundation of Popery, if the superstructure had been rather more becoming; they would not have renounced the essence, had the form been less odious.

Hence the labour of the first Reformers was not so much to examine, expose, and exchange the Popish *foundation*, as to demolish the superstructure, and to erect upon the ancient basis something more conformable to the inspired code. Still the actual existence of authority to compel a uniformity of creed and worship, provided these were scriptural, was almost universally assumed as an uncontroverted principle. And the chief dispute was where this authority should reside. The Protestants replied, not in the Pope, not in the Church of Rome, not in any foreign power, but in the ecclesiastical or the civil dignitaries, or in the union of both, in each country. But every argument directed against the assumed basis, the very essence of Popery, was equally directed against themselves. Grant that God has given them authority to compel their fellow-Christians in religious concerns, —to adopt a creed however scriptural, and a worship however suitable,—the antichristian *principle* is secure, and a wide door is opened for the admission of all its extravagances, superstitions, and bloody persecutions. Human authority supposes human persons, and these are not only changeable but perpetually changing. What by them is pronounced lawful and scriptural in one period, is declared at another to be unlawful and unscriptural; what is now judged proper and instructive, will soon be pronounced unbecoming and hostile to the best interests of religion.

These destructive consequences and glaring absurdities, with

which ecclesiastical history abounds, cannot be avoided, unless the Christian Church be regarded, as it was in the apostolic age, as a *voluntary society* taking the SACRED SCRIPTURES as its *only* directory, relative to faith, worship, and practice. And for the same reason that *one* body of people has authority from the Divine oracles to do this, all *others* are entitled to the like privilege. If any adopt a wrong creed, an unedifying mode of worship, or any customs or conduct in religion not interfering with *civil order*, to their own Master in heaven they are amenable; but not to any self-constituted human authority. To resign this Christian liberty, is to measure back our steps to Rome, and to prepare another scaffold for the blood of the innocent. To suppose that God has authorised some men to *impose* a system of doctrines, and an order of worship upon others, is no less absurd and impious than to suppose that He has committed the consciences of a multitude of immortal beings to the disposal of a priest. The *authority* in each case is equally *gratuitous*, and equally inconsistent with the nature of revealed religion. The Bible is professedly addressed to every man alike; and to its Divine Author exclusively is each accountable for his use or neglect of its contents. There we may learn what a Christian church is, what we are to believe, and what worship and religious conduct God requires.

Consistent Christians renounce not only Jewish and Papal traditions, and the authority of popes, councils, and human legislators, of whatever country or name, in reference to religion, as to what they are to believe and how they are to worship God; but likewise all *compulsive* power in the very communion with which they are connected, except that of *exclusion*, when they appear to the majority of the body not to answer the design for which they are voluntarily associated. But this expulsion leaves them at liberty to unite with any other church that may choose to receive them. To establish coercive compliance instead of expulsion, or to deny full liberty to any man to choose his own church, and to every church the same liberty of choosing or expelling its own members, is the very essence of Popery. To assume that the Church is but one associate body, in contradistinction to several communities all under one head, Jesus Christ, is subversive of the true meaning of Scripture, and of the real nature of Christ's kingdom on earth; it is incompatible with all rational principles of society, and pregnant with the most enormous abuses. Nor is there *any evidence* for

concluding that uniformity would be *compulsively* enjoined, were the Messiah to reign upon earth personally visible among men. How presumptuous, then, must it be for any to arrogate to themselves in His name, that which the nature of His kingdom (not to insist on His own actual conduct while on earth) forbids us to suppose He would Himself exercise. The government of the Church is not political but moral; and the very nature of moral government implies *liberty*, or freedom from temporal constraint and compulsion. The Jews, indeed, were under a theocracy, including a *political* society, and in that respect rebellion against Divine laws was attended with corporal punishments; but the Christian Church, as the declarations and examples of the New Testament fully evince, is of a character essentially different, being a voluntary society of disciples purely and exclusively *moral* in its constitution and sanctions.

Protestants in general, and all consistent Christians, renounce also the authority of all *apocryphal* writings, though often bound up with our Bibles, and though they contain many maxims of wisdom, many beautiful lessons of morality, and some valuable historical information. And in the same class they justly place the writings of the apostolical and subsequent *fathers* of the Christian Church, and, in short, all *human* compositions of every age and of every kind. We maintain, on the firmest ground, that the BIBLE, the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, have these *criteria:* they are given by *inspiration* of God; and were *designed* for the use of mankind to the end of time. Every writing that bears these marks is canonical; but no other. This is not the place for producing arguments to prove that every book in our canon corresponds to these criteria; nor is it necessary, because it has been often done professedly and at large. All others are rejected because they do not answer to a standard so evidently equitable. Hence, for instance, all *traditions* are excluded, even could they be proved to be delivered by Moses or the apostles when under immediate inspiration; because they want the criterion of being *designed* for the perpetual use of mankind. And the same might be said of any recorded sermon, discourse, or private letter of an apostle, though he were divinely inspired at the time of communicating his thoughts. Were the autograph of an apostolic epistle discovered, and proved to be so beyond all reasonable doubt, it could not stand as *authoritative* in Christ's

Church. For Divine truth however pure, and inspiration however high, without the evidence of a writing being *designed* by infinite wisdom for the standing use of the Church, can never form a part of the sacred canon, though it might contain important information, or eminently conduce to piety. How much less credit, therefore, is due to the authority of pretended modern inspirations! If indeed they could be proved genuine, still they would have no force to bind the consciences of Christ's disciples. A contrary opinion, I am aware, has but too generally prevailed—that individual inspiration, supposing its reality, *ought* to reduce the consciences of others to subjection; but this I cannot help regarding as pernicious, because the admission of such authority implies the insufficiency of Scripture to answer the end for which it was bestowed, and is therefore an impeachment of supreme wisdom; not to mention that it is fraught with the most perilous consequences to society. The BIBLE, in short, is our only authoritative rule, and was given by the all-wise God as our infallible directory to truth, to holiness, and to heaven. The sacred canon being completed by the Revelation given to the apostle John, nothing more is now to be expected, as possessing canonical authority for the use of the Church of God. It has, therefore, become the great duty of each individual to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the sacred volume; to form the best judgment he can of its real meaning, and from it to derive his creed, his mode of worship, and his rules of discipline. Those who adopt similar views on these leading points are authorised, by the God of the Bible and the Lord of conscience, to form themselves into distinct societies for mutual and progressive improvement, to exhibit "the word of life," and to promote the salvation of men.

Had the New Testament been addressed to persons in authority, ecclesiastical or civil, containing directions how *they* should exercise their legislative wisdom and prudence, their discretion and power, accompanied with a declaration that their dependents should be constrained to submit to their explanations, there would have been some pretence for enforcing uniformity of faith and worship. But in the proportion that this was an evident *part* of its contents, would have been the suspicion of its not being as a *whole* a code of religion from a Divine Moral Governor, but a political collusion, "a cunningly-devised fable," to keep the minds of the many in subjection to the few. If the Catholic interpreta-

tion on this head could be substantiated from the New Testament, this would form a stronger objection to its Divine authority than anything that the infidel has ever urged. And, in point of fact, the assumption that this authority is actually contained in the New Testament has been a prolific source of infidelity. In this conclusion, that the Scriptures delegate to persons in office the power of giving an authoritative interpretation of Scripture, and a power of compelling uniformity in matters of religion, they entrench themselves, inferring that a religion so inconsistent with the nature of moral government cannot originate from God. Thus from one extreme, contemplated with deserved disgust, they proceed to another, without examining the sacred writings in order to ascertain whether their conclusion has not been rash and groundless. Were such characters sufficiently upright and ingenuous, and had they a real affection for essential and eternal truth, they would perceive nothing in those writings but what flows from infinite wisdom, benevolence, and equity. They would discover that a pretended authority in some Christians to compel others to conform to their wishes, is the deduction of sophistry; but a deduction pertinaciously adhered to, because found convenient in politics for the support of extended power. I am far from intending to insinuate by these remarks, that it is not the duty and the wise policy of civil governments to countenance and encourage what they believe to be the purest religion. What I intend to assert is, that they have no delegated authority to adopt compulsive measures, in *any* case, under a pretence of promoting uniformity. It is fully admissible, moreover, that persons at the head of any civil government are authorised to adopt their own system of religion, and to promote that system by arguments, by private bounties, or by any means they please which do not encroach on the liberties of others. Whether their system and proceedings are *just* in the sight of God is a distinct consideration. While no human power has a right to interfere with them, they are accountable to God for the use they make of their own abilities and influence.

The dispute respecting a delegated authority to enforce uniformity in creeds, worship, and discipline, relates not so much to the *circumstantials* as to the *nature* of Christianity. The proper question is not, whether a creed be scriptural, and therefore may be safely enforced upon the multitude, but whether the nature, the

real genius of Christianity, admits of such enforcement? whether the idea be not subversive of itself, the conclusion sophistical to such a degree as to discredit the very existence of a religion declared to be from God? and whether the two claims be not so absolutely incompatible that both cannot possibly be true? The first Reformers, Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius, Knox, and others, were, in the first instance, roused by the vicious *exercise* of power, the sale of indulgences, the venality and profligacy of the clerical orders, and the like, little doubting the *propriety* of well-directed ecclesiastical claims, and the right of princes to enforce *true* religion. Their arguments were popular, and well adapted to awaken from their lethargy a people nurtured in ignorance and superstition. The wisdom of Providence was visible in directing their zeal and courage against glaring enormities, with which the most illiterate might well be shocked. Had they applied their attention to the question of authority itself, and its incompatibility with the nature of the Christian religion, their reasoning would have been lost upon the multitude, who were not qualified to judge of radical truths, and whose regard could be obtained only to obvious abuses of power, and to the plainest doctrines of salvation.

That the views of the first Reformers were very imperfect on the subject of authority in matters of religion, is evident from their subsequent conduct. They still considered councils, synods, and ecclesiastical assemblies, as invested with a plenitude of power to enact laws for the Reformed, and to sanction them by compulsive measures, even to capital punishments! Thus the pestiferous branches of Popery were lopped off, while the root and stem of it were preserved, from which might hereafter proceed, even among the Reformed Churches, vigorous shoots of the same noxious quality. It is admitted that personal piety appeared in its radiant lustre, compared with monkish pretensions to sanctity. Individual religious excellences have been displayed in denominations greatly dissimilar—the Romish communion not excepted. But personal worth can never sanctify false principles; nor can the assumption of such principles constitute any part of personal worth.

The conclusion to which these observations conduct us is obvious —that no Christian can *consistently* maintain the authority of *Scripture* in religion, and the authority of *men* at the same time. And this will further appear from the consideration of the very nature of *faith*, in reference to the Scriptures as a Divine revela-

tion. For why does a person consistently give credit to the Scriptures? Is it not because of the *infallibility* of the Author? It is not merely because the Scriptures contain important *truths*,—for to this distinction many other writings are entitled,—but because the Divine Legislator is incapable of error, and because their authority cannot be disputed by the subjects of His government, without incurring His righteous displeasure. Any body of men, therefore, claiming submission to their own authority, in religious concerns, are bound to produce credentials of their infallibility, otherwise their claims deserve no regard. But all human authority is fallible, because the views of men, by which it is directed, may be right, or may be wrong. Human minds, the supposed interpreters of truth and right, are not only mutable, but are often actually changing. If a Christian, therefore, is to submit his judgment and conscience to human fallible authority, how is it possible for him to retain his *faith* in that which is infallible? And even where nothing is required by men contrary to Scripture, this is merely *accidental;* the *nature* of the claim continuing precisely the same. If our faith in truths contained in any human composition be not ultimately fixed on the authority of God, in whose revealed will they are included, it is a faith merely human. Divine faith, such as God demands for His testimony, cannot be denied without exposure to His anger; and to retain this faith steadfastly is absolutely incompatible with an admission of any other claim. Submission to these different requirements can no more co-exist, than supreme deference to the commands of two masters. "One is our Master;" all others are brethren, fellow-disciples, fellow-subjects. Peter had no more legal power to compel Paul, than Paul had to compel Peter. Nor can any *civil* distinction among Christ's disciples alter the case, without exchanging Divine for human authority, and preferring the latter to the former; in a word, without abandoning an eternal rock for the "sand and stubble" of human frailty.

The governors of the Roman Church had perspicacity enough to discover the utter incompatibility of implicit submission to two authorities, the one infallible, and the other fallible; and therefore, in order to preserve consistency, they maintain the infallibility of the Church; thus identifying the "rock" and the "sand." This high prerogative of the Church, however, they ascribe to a Divine promise, that the Church, including its governors, should be "led into all truth." This, indeed, has the appearance of consistency;

but, if closely examined, what does it imply less than a delegation to mortals of an incommunicable Divine attribute? It may be argued, that the apostles were frail mortals, and yet to their canonical writings we attach infallible authority; why then may not the same infallibility belong to their successors in office to the end of time? This specious argument is nothing but a profound sophism. The property of infallibility cannot, in the nature of things, belong to any other besides that God by the influence of whose Holy Spirit the prophets and apostles delivered their testimony; nor could their testimony have any claim on our implicit belief beyond the evidence they gave of their being under the influence of that infallible Guide. But an inference drawn from a *supposed promise* of infallible legal power from heaven continuing in the Church, is only a human interpretation; and this necessarily sinks the pretended authority to the level of *fallibility*, and therefore the argument subverts itself. It implies, besides, an addition to the canonical authority of Scripture, and an impious impeachment of its sufficiency to point out the way to God, to religious truth, to duty, and to heaven.

Having considered the *authority* contained in the sacred writings, compared with other claims, we proceed to contemplate the nature and extent of *scriptural evidence* in reference to religion and morals. For this purpose, it will be expedient to state and confirm the proper character of the Scriptures themselves, and what limits are to be assigned to the information they contain. What we state concerning them is, that they are the fruit of unerring inspiration,—that they express the will of God to men,—that, being inspired, all they contain is true,—that nothing which is really inconsistent with these records can be true,—that they contain every truth it concerns us to know relating to salvation from sin and misery,—and, finally, that they are the designed standard of religious truth.

When we say, that the Scriptures are the fruit of unerring *inspiration*, we mean, that holy men were enlightened, instructed, and powerfully moved by the Holy Spirit to communicate to mankind what they substantially contain; hence we call the Bible "the volume of inspiration," or "the inspired volume." When we say, that the Scriptures express the *will* of God, we mean, that, as thus inspired, they must of course announce the will of Him whose inspiration gave them existence; for it is not

supposable, that inspiration and will can be separated: hence we denominate the Scriptures "the revealed will of God." When we declare, that all they contain is *true*, we intend, that they contain nothing of importance, rightly understood, which is either false or contradictory: for whatever is divinely inspired must have the character of truth, and all truth is consistent—the will of God never contradicts itself: hence we denominate the Bible "the Scriptures of truth." When we declare, that nothing which is *inconsistent* with Scripture can be true, we intend, that no sentiment, no assertion can be in all respects a verity, however plausible *à priori*, if it be really irreconcilable with the sacred oracles accurately compared and interpreted.

We further assert, that the Scriptures contain every truth it concerns us to know relating to *salvation*. The grand end for which holy men were inspired, as the organs of the Divine will, referred, either directly or indirectly, to this momentous object; an object therefore for which their writings must be fully adequate: hence the Bible, and especially the New Testament, may be styled "the word of salvation." When we assert, that the Scriptures are the *standard* of religious truth, our meaning is, that every religious doctrine or sentiment should be brought to them as a *test*, that what is inconsistent with them should be rejected, and what harmonises with them should be received.

If the preceding particulars, respecting a Divine revelation, may be considered as axioms in Christian theology, relating to evidence, it is obvious that the Christian Scriptures, whose claims to inspiration are so decidedly superior to all others, (as has been often proved,) must be a treasure incalculably precious. It likewise follows, that it is the imperious duty of every man, who has access to these records, to examine their contents with care, humility, and impartiality, lest they should be found a treasure in the possession of ignorance and folly. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?"* At the same time, it behoves us to guard against mistakes and false deductions, under an appearance of honouring the sacred books. By ascribing to these holy writings what they do not claim, we encourage and promote infidelity. Though the Scriptures are comprehensive to a degree truly wonderful, yet they do not expressly enunciate everything that God wills, for the Bible is

* Prov. xvii. 16.

not a record of all the Divine decrees. Who can question that there are countless myriads of divinely-purposed operations which are not explicitly related in this hallowed volume? Who would expect to find in it all the events of history, natural, civil, and ecclesiastical? Replete as it is with wisdom, it would be repugnant to common sense to imagine it contained the principles and rules of all the arts invented by mankind, that it was a cyclopædia of the sciences, a vocabulary of all languages, and a storehouse of universal literature. Who can suppose that a volume of revealed religion is the only source from which can be derived the axioms and demonstrations of mathematical and metaphysical truths? How unreasonable to require in a book, because inspired, the rules of philosophising, like those in Newton's Principia, logical axioms of true reasoning, or directions for detecting all classes of sophisms!

Some have imagined that there is no attainable *certainty* respecting good and evil, virtue and vice, their nature, desert, and ultimate causes respectively, but what is deduced from *explicit* scriptural evidence; and that whatever is not proved directly from the sacred pages can be only *conjectural* knowledge. They appear to forget the endless and jarring *conjectures* of men respecting the genuine *sense* of Scripture, on the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity, which their contradictory expositions testify. When they suppose that an attempt to establish the consistency of the moral character of God with the existence of moral evil, or to ascertain its true origin from any other source of evidence besides the *testimony* of Scripture, about the real import of which men are continually differing, is "being wise above what is written," they act a part very weak, to say the least, and which in some cases must appear very ridiculous. The evidence of Scripture is given us for the obedience of *faith;* but not to confute the objections or the pretended reasons of infidels, in reference to the principles themselves on which the Scriptures are founded.

However we, as Christians, may be satisfied with scriptural evidence, who would not either pity our weakness, or ridicule our folly, if we should attempt to convince a deist that his objections were *unreasonable*, by an appeal to Scripture as a rule of decision? The objector would say, One cause why I think your Scriptures are not true is this, what they assert is not consistent with the principles of reason. In the view of Christians, the Old and New

Testaments contain Divine testimonies; and what they *positively* assert, in the true import of the assertion, we have just cause to believe is a truth from God. And as the Scriptures were given to us with the express design of making us "wise unto salvation," we may be sure they are amply sufficient for *that* purpose. But the infidel or sceptic charges them with containing unreasonable assertions sufficient to discredit their authority. Are we then to shrink from the debate, and to leave such persons to triumph in a supposed conquest, without exposing their weakness? Suppose an atheist argues against the being of a God, and he is confronted with this quotation, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," fortified with the maxim, "We must not be wise above what is written;" would he not regard it as a concession that we have no evidence for the being of a God, without begging the question in dispute—viz., that there is such a being, who has revealed His will to men? Ought we not to produce demonstrative evidence from principles of reason? May we not appeal to marks of design both in our own frame, and in the world around us; or to metaphysical evidence, arguing from effects to a first intelligent cause? From the former, may we not urge the *infinite improbability* of so many signs of contrivance without a contriver? And from the latter may we not conclusively demonstrate the *impossibility* of such a chain of effects as is obvious to every one, and which an atheist cannot deny, without ascending to a being who is uncaused? And if an atheistic sophist has recourse to logic and metaphysics, may not a theist turn upon him his own weapons?

The Scriptures assert the *fact* of moral evil in a variety of ways; what it is, and what it deserves. They also declare the *manner* of its entrance into our world. But captious sophists renounce their authority, and require evidence for what is asserted from principles of reason and equity. Is it then wrong, rather is it not strictly proper, to confront them on their own principles, and to shew that scriptural assertions on these interesting points are conformable to the highest reason? The Bible testifies that God is an equitable Governor of His rational creatures, that the Judge of the "whole earth will do right," and that He is a sovereign dispenser of His bounties. But an objector disdains this evidence as founded in Scripture, and appeals to several supposed acts of unjustifiable partiality, towards persons or nations, as recorded there, and affects to discredit revelation on that account.

Ought we not, therefore, to shew that his objections are founded in ignorance; that the very facts to which he appeals in justification of his unbelief are perfectly consistent with equity and sovereignty, which are essential to the very nature of an infinitely perfect Being? And may not the necessary consequences implied in these grand truths be shewn in a similar way?

Suppose it were debated, What is the true system of the planetary world? who would think it sufficient to say, The Bible declares many things respecting our earth, the sun, the moon, and the starry heavens; it speaks of the sun rising and setting, but never of the earth as revolving around it, or turning on its own axis; let the Bible decide the question; and let us beware of being "wise above what is written." Such an appeal to scriptural evidence would be unsatisfactory not only to those who reject its authority, but also to those who regard it with the greatest reverence, provided there is found no positive evidence, ascertained with fairness, to which an appeal can be pertinently made. When any one contends that the Newtonian representation of the solar system is the only consistent one, are we to reproach him as "wise above what is written," because he does not deduce his conclusion from a Divine testimony? If, indeed, the Scripture professed to settle this point, and gave its decision against him, he would be obliged, in consistency, either to reject its authority or to renounce his conclusion. If it contain no decided testimony on the point, we may infer that the knowledge of it is not essential to salvation. There are, however, many branches of science, and innumerable parts and degrees of knowledge, highly conducive to the improvement of the mind, and friendly to true religion, which are no more professedly taught in the sacred oracles than the laws of matter and motion.

But these things, it may be said, belong to *natural* philosophy. Let us then advert to matters of *right* and *wrong*, or, in a word, *equity*. In a Christian country we profess that the Holy Scriptures are a sufficient rule of faith and practice. How is it, therefore, that in our deliberative assemblies, in parliament, at the bar, or in our courts of justice, every point concerning right and wrong is not settled by texts of Scripture? Are we to charge our senators, counsellors, and judges, with being "wise above what is written," because they do not decide every cause by the Sacred Scriptures? Every one must see that such a mode would be

impertinent. Even supposing that all present were true Christians, and disposed to give scriptural evidence its fullest weight, the difficulty would still remain, whether the passages produced were *applicable* to the point of right and wrong in debate. Scriptural evidence may be compared to experiments in philosophy, or to acts of legislation in municipal law. Nothing should be owned as a physical principle which contradicts well-attested experiments; and nothing should be acknowledged as valid in law which contradicts a legislative decision. In like manner, nothing should be admitted as moral truth which opposes a Divine testimony. But how absurd the inference, that nothing in civil life can be proved to be either right or wrong, but what can be substantiated by an act of parliament,—that there is no truth in physics but what can be subjected to actual experiment,—or, that there is neither truth nor error in morals but what can be proved from Divine testimony!

I am apprehensive that the sentiment conveyed by the following paragraph is not sufficiently considered by Christians, and even by Protestants. It is the language of one, however, on whom persons of different denominations have agreed to bestow the epithet "judicious." The "testimonies of God," observes Hooker, "are all sufficient unto that end for which they were given. Therefore, accordingly, we do receive them; we do not think that God hath omitted anything needful unto His purpose, and left His intent to be accomplished by our devisings. What the Scripture *purposeth*, the same in all points it doth perform. Howbeit, that here we swerve not in judgment, one thing especially we must observe—namely, that the absolute perfection of Scripture is seen by relation unto that end whereunto it tendeth."* "St Augustine was resolute in points of Christianity to credit none, how godly and learned soever he were, unless he confirmed his sentence by the Scriptures, or by some reason not contrary to them. Let them, then, with St Augustine, reject and condemn that which is not grounded either on the Scripture, or on some reason not contrary to Scripture, and we are ready to give them our hands in token of friendly consent with them."† St Paul observes, "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."‡ Let anything be shewn to be *against* the truth of revelation, and it is a sufficient reason among Christians why it should be renounced. Chilling-

* Hooker's Eccl. Pol., book ii., § 8. † Ibid., § 4. ‡ 2 Cor. xiii. 8.

worth's maxim is, "The Bible *only* is the religion of Protestants," —the Bible "only" as opposed to the Bible *and tradition*, or to the exclusion of ecclesiastical canons, and all other human authority in religion; but not as opposed to the evidence of natural dictates or scientific conclusions, for truth can never contradict itself. And this is one reason why we reject transubstantiation, because that interpretation of Scripture which is urged by Popish authors in its defence is inconsistent with sound philosophy and the dictates of common sense. Scriptural evidence is both positive and corrective, as far as it goes, and conducts the believer to salvation, but it does not exclude all other evidence. Many things in ethics, as well as in physics, are demonstrable truths, which never could have been ascertained by the Bible only.

The Holy Scriptures are wisely silent about such things as were not *intended* to be explained by them; and we may infer from that silence that *Divine faith* is not required, for, on the supposition, there is no Divine testimony concerning them. For instance, we are not required to believe on the *testimony* of God that the earth moves round the sun; but the evidence of this fact being clear from other sources of information, we may safely conclude that it is not contrary to revealed truth, because no conjectural interpretation of Scripture can be paramount to this evidence. The Scriptures, however, contain principles so comprehensive as *virtually* to include all truth. For they testify of GOD, His nature and perfections, whence all truth flows; and of CREATURES, as deriving their existence, laws, operations, and excellences from Him, and as universally dependent upon Him. Were the question put, therefore, What is the ultimate cause of gravitation? we may confidently assert, as what is virtually included in revelation, that it is not an *independent* principle. The natural philosopher, whose province it is to inquire into second causes, may indeed say that he is ignorant of the cause of gravitation; but a divine or a moralist, who inquires after primary or ultimate causes, may safely ascribe it to God, to whose energy all matter and motion, and all their properties, are finally reducible. This conclusion is implied in just notions of God as taught us in the Holy Scriptures; but to shew how the conclusion follows may require a logical or a metaphysical train of evidence.

The Scriptures clearly ascribe all *good* to GOD, and all *moral evil* to OURSELVES; and so far our faith in the Divine testimony is

demanded. But if any reject the obligations of faith, and appeal to principles of reason, he may be met with metaphysical and logical demonstrations of the same truth. By so doing, we do not abandon the evidence of Divine testimony, but superadd the other kind of evidence for the conviction of an unbeliever, and for the confirmation of the testimony. Thus the ways of God are justified on different grounds.

To renounce this process, is attended with many evils and degradations. It casts a base reflection on the bounty of Providence in affording us different methods of investigating and finding truth. Thus, in common life, the evidence of one sense may be added to that of another, and that of reasoning to both. And who but an enthusiast can question, that in divinity and moral science fair deductions from well-established principles are to be received as verities? Nay, to deny the legitimacy of this process, is a reflection on the sacred oracles, as if they were not founded on eternal truth, or were not true until they were *declared* to be the will of God. Surely unalterable truths and revelation are not at variance. It may be well worthy of attention whether false notions, or at least imperfect views of the just limits of scriptural evidence, have not enchained the progress of moral science, whose principles are eternal realities. Besides, by disjoining the connexion of truths revealed and unrevealed, the usefulness of religious instruction is injuriously limited; Christian consolation is needlessly abridged, by rejecting an additional ground of evidence; and, finally, the absurd conclusions of scepticism and infidelity are left to triumph, while the glories of the Divine perfections and government are, by irrational, though long-assumed maxims, criminally veiled.

CHAPTER II.

DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS OF TERMS.

SECTION I.

Of Equity, Liberty, a Moral Agent, Moral Evil, the Nature of Things, a Negative Cause, and Permission.

HAVING occasion, in this essay, to make a frequent use of the terms equity and sovereignty as expressive of the fundamental subjects discussed, and of a variety of other terms and subjects connected with these leading thoughts, it is requisite, before we proceed, to define and explain them. The design, however, is not an attempt to impose on others a new nomenclature, as expressive of theological and moral ideas, but to prevent ambiguity and misunderstanding. All I ask is, that my reasoning be judged according to *my own* explanations, which are adopted, not through the affectation of novelty, but the expediency of the case. When new ideas arise on any subject, two inconveniences present themselves: either, first, the invention of new terms to express them; or, secondly, the adoption of old terms with a necessary variation of meaning. Of these two inconveniences attendant upon every language, I prefer an explanation of terms in common use.

By EQUITY, as a Divine attribute, I understand *a supreme disposition and right to give unto all their* DUE. That this is an attribute of Deity is too plain to need a formal proof. But, further to illustrate the meaning of the definition, it may be observed, that a thing is properly due from one being to another, when there is a true ground of claim, either in the nature of things, or on account of any other adequate consideration. Thus, in whatever particular a creature has a true ground of claim on God, that attribute of His nature which we denominate His equity engages

Him to bestow it; but when no such ground exists, there can be no engagement. Whether, therefore, the object of Divine equity be God himself, or His creatures, this perfection of His nature engages Him to grant, to the utmost extent, what is *truly* claimed. And it behoves us to reflect and remember, that in proportion as we are equitable, we shall give to GOD the things that are God's, and to creatures the things that are theirs.

When it is said that something is due to any object, it implies a person owing the thing claimable. And as the subject under consideration is *Divine* equity, we may consider it in reference to God as owing, and to some of the most important objects as having a claim upon Him. We observe, then, that God owes to *Himself* everything that does not imply a contradiction or imperfection; or, in other words, He can do nothing which is incompatible with His infinite excellences or His real dignity. To a *creature*, as such, God owes nothing; for the very idea of derivation, and that of absolute dependence, which are essential to a creature, exclude all claim on the Creator for existence itself, and consequently for any of its enjoyments. But this cannot be said of a creature considered as accountable. For the idea of accountability founds a claim on him who requires. We therefore remark, that God owes to an *accountable creature* those things which are essential in order to constitute him such; particularly the faculties of *intellect* and *will, freedom* of choice, and *objects suitable* to his wants. And if this point be examined with strictness and impartiality, it will be found, that whatever an accountable creature enjoys more than these, is not claimable as due, but is a matter of undeserved favour.

When I say that equity requires of the person owing, the giving of his due to every one, the meaning is not that the operation of equity can in no case be suspended, but that the creature has no ground of claim against that operation. Though the creature is secure from *suffering* anything but what is in strictness his due; yet equity does not bind God against conferring acts of *favour*, which may illustrate, by the manner of bestowing them, the honour of His extensive government. This must be granted by all who admit that there is mercy with God. And what is Divine mercy but that modification of goodness which *overrules* the claims of strict equity towards a creature deserving misery, in a manner consistent with God's real honour? That Divine equity is *bound*

only on *one side* of the line of rectitude, if I may so express myself, appears also from this consideration: that otherwise, though a moral system from its very nature is defectible, God could have no right to overrule an actual defection for securing the final happiness of any one offender, which is absurd.

Yet, it must be observed, as the delinquency of a defectible creature would be naturally followed with penal evil; and as equity requires that the penal sanction (which either explicitly or tacitly belongs to every law) should follow the transgression of a law enacted; we must conclude, that the office of sovereign benevolence, or mercy, does not consist in the annihilation or the disannulling of that sanction, but in finding and appointing an expedient, whereby the equitable claims are granted, while the offender is not irremediably bound over to deserved punishment. This exhibits the glory of redemption:—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested." "That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift."

It has been before observed, that accountability supposes *freedom;* or that an accountable creature has a right, in truth and equity, to claim it of him who requires an account, as a condition indispensably requisite. This is otherwise called the *liberty* of a rational being to choose his own end and the means of obtaining it; or, to prefer an object of happiness and the method of securing its possession. By this LIBERTY, or *freedom,* I understand *an exemption from constraint and restraint.* Its general nature is not a positive faculty either of the will or of the soul; but "exemption," which is a *negative* idea. And the special difference of this kind of exemption is, that the rational being is not "constrained" to make a wrong or culpable choice or preference, on the one side; nor is "restrained" from making a right or virtuous choice or preference, on the other. In a word, this freedom denotes what God *does not,* rather than what He *does,* in reference to an accountable creature. It expresses that the subject is free from constraint to evil, and that he is not restrained from good, when he chooses, out of various objects, what appears

to him eligible. It implies, that in all instances of responsibility he is absolutely free to choose or to act according to his pleasure, preference, or inclination.

It may be added, for illustration, that this liberty implies a diversity of objects, without which there can be no preference. That this is essential to the idea of accountability, is plain from this consideration, that where there is but one object of choice, there is no possibility of erring, which is evidently incompatible with the notion of being accountable. To be free from *defectibility*, or a *liableness* to choose amiss, is an incommunicable perfection of Deity. We may further observe, that no one can be morally free in his elections but he who chooses what *appears* to him eligible; for there is no medium between the exercise of this rational freedom, and constraint by such a fixed natural necessity as is totally incompatible with accountability. Impulsive *spontaneity* belongs to brutes; but *freedom*, its reverse, belongs exclusively to moral agents.

As there are different kinds of moral agents, and as the same agent may be viewed in different circumstances, a definition suited to each variety must be somewhat dissimilar. By a MORAL AGENT in the most general sense, and without any exception of persons or circumstances, I mean, *a being capable of enjoying the chief good.* This definition is applicable to all intelligent beings, whether in heaven, earth, or hell. "The chief good," as here *objectively* taken, is JEHOVAH all-sufficient. When taken *subjectively*, it denotes the highest degree of happiness; in which acceptation it includes the full enjoyment of the object. Between brutes and mankind, in various respects, there are indefinite degrees of approximation; but in this particular there is the most essential difference, since every one of the human race, but no brute however exalted, is "capable of enjoying the chief good." The capability here intended expresses a natural or constitutional aptitude, not a moral fitness.

A PERFECT moral agent is *a being actually enjoying the chief good, and who enjoys every inferior good in a regular subordination.* This definition applies to God, holy angels, and glorified saints; and to Adam and Eve while in a state of rectitude. But righteous men in the present state, though they "actually enjoy the chief good," so far as to know, love, and participate in a kind of holy intercourse with God, are not "perfect;" because their

enjoyment of "every inferior good" is not always, if ever, in a "regular subordination" to the chief.

An ACCOUNTABLE moral agent is *a being who possesses a natural capacity for enjoying the chief good, who has moral means both suitable and sufficient to prevent him from sinning, with the liberty of abusing or not abusing those means.* This definition is applicable to all accountable moral agents whatever, the apostate angels and human souls in the lowest state of misery not excepted. That these have a natural *capacity* of enjoying the chief good, and the *liberty* of making a right or a wrong use of means, needs neither proof nor explanation. But some, from a preconceived notion of "moral means," may find it difficult to admit that apostate spirits have "suitable and sufficient moral means to prevent them from sinning." Means, in reference to moral agency, denote objective considerations, or inducements, which, in their own nature, are adapted to promote virtue, and which would do so in a virtuous mind. The devils *believe* that there is one God; and were it not for their culpable enmity, or an evil disposition, this would prevent their sinning against Him. Their wickedness, however, does not alter the nature, the suitableness, or the sufficiency of such moral means, objectively considered. If infernal spirits are *offenders* as well as sufferers, they must possess *moral* means sufficient and suitable, in themselves considered, to prevent their sinning against God, and *freedom* for that purpose: the former, because the abuse of such means constitutes the very essence of their crimes; the latter, because their liberty of not sinning is essential to their accountability. It is scarcely needful to remark, that this view of the subject is applicable *à fortiori* to depraved men in our world. If apostate spirits in a state of the greatest wickedness and infernal despair are inexcusable, because they have a natural capacity and sufficient objective inducements for acting otherwise; how much more inexcusable are men upon earth, even in their lowest state of degradation and depravity!

A *perfect* accountable moral agent in a state of ORIGINAL PROBATION is *a being who has an actual enjoyment of the chief good; suitable and sufficient means for avoiding transgression and acting rightly; liberty to sin and not to sin; and a defectibility of nature.* The first parts of this definition have been before noticed, and need no further explanation. When it is said that he has "a defectibility of nature," it is intended to express this primary and

eternal truth, that a created nature, however perfect, is *defectible*. Indefectibility, every reflecting unprejudiced mind must admit, is an incommunicable attribute of Deity, no less than infinity, independence, all-sufficiency, and immutability. Defectibility, therefore, is an essential property of every nature but the Divine. To deny this, is to identify Creator and creature, and to contradict the plainest facts—the facts of actual defection and crimes.

Here it may be further observed, since neither defect nor defectibility can, in any respect, be in God, or belong to Him as an infinitely perfect Being, the idea of His imparting them is necessarily excluded; for how can He possibly impart what He neither has, nor can have? Therefore, the ground, the cause, or the reason of defectibility is nothing positive, else it would be from God, but a *negative* principle, *essentially related* to limited existence. Whatever perfection or excellence, whatever faculty or estimable quality, whatever good principle or property, any creature has or can have, it is the gift of God; but the *cause of defectibility* is not of that character. Were it a positive principle, it would be something perfect of its kind; but is the cause of defectibility a perfection? How, then, can its opposite be an infinite perfection and excellence? Can an infinitely perfect nature be at once the ground both of indefectibility and defectibility? The two ideas are absolutely incompatible. The latter, therefore, is of the creature exclusively. To God belongs *absolute perfection;* to a creature, however excellent and exalted, *comparative imperfection*. And what can this be but the *want* of that perfection which is unlimited? In a word, it cannot be anything but a *negative* property *essentially related* to limited existence, or to every nature that is not absolutely infinite.

We may again remark, if such a moral agent as is now under consideration has not *in himself* a ground or negative cause of deviating from rectitude, when poised in the balance of strict equity, or when he has all that is strictly due to him, he would not be defectible,—that is, would not be a creature. Besides, the very notion of accountableness implies a possibility of receding from the rule of rectitude; but a being that is not defectible has not a possibility of defection. And as God has no defect, nor any ground of defectibility, how can He impart it, or be in any respect its author or its cause? Yet, by giving existence to a creature, He affords an *occasion* for a comparative defect, limitation, dependence,

and all other negative properties, to arise. Thus the existence of a mathematical circle, which is a positive thing, gives occasion to an inseparable *negative* property in that figure, for its mathematical centre is a *relative nothing*, or what has neither length, breadth, thickness, nor any conceivable dimensions; in a word, it is *nothing related* to something, but without which, nevertheless, a proper idea of a circle would be impossible, and its properties incapable of demonstration.

In the definition it is said, that such a moral agent "has liberty to sin and not to sin." By liberty is meant, as before shewn, exemption from constraint and restraint, and here it is applied to the act of sin. That such an agent has a liberty of not sinning must be allowed, else it would follow that a moral creature would be under a physical necessity of sinning; which would destroy his accountability, and involve a notion at once unworthy of God, and in its own nature impossible, for, as will be further explained in the sequel, sin has no *efficient* ultimate cause, but a *deficient* one only. Were the proper nature of sin, or the sinfulness of an act, adequately considered, we should never hear of the absurdity, the blasphemous impiety, of GOD being the *author of sin*, by a reprobating decree. It may, however, be observed, in brief, that if any being has, in equity, no *deficient source* of deviation from rectitude, he is not in the rank of moral accountable agents, or of created existence. Such is the awful prerogative of Jehovah as the Moral Governor; and such is the absolute dependence of a creature!

By MORAL EVIL, considered as a *sinful act*, I understand *a deviation from, or want of conformity to, Divine rectitude.* What I call "Divine rectitude" is the standard to which every moral agent ought to be conformed, according to the constituted relation of things. The nature of God is immutable, but the capacities of His creatures, and the existence of surrounding objects, are the effects of His will. And these capacities are such, that He has an equitable claim, that they who possess them should be always conformable to rectitude. A continuation in a state of perfect moral rectitude depends on universal conformity to this constituted relation of things. Thus, for instance, man in his primeval state stood related to all the objects in the universe around him. Every capacity of mind, and every organ of sense, had various objects suited to gratify and render happy its own nature. But any deliberate wrong choice or use of these innumerable good things—as to

relative subordination of preference, degree of attachment, or the like—constituted a deviation from rectitude, a forfeiture of original perfection, and, in a word, a degree of moral evil.

Moral evil in its *abstract* nature, or the SINFULNESS of a moral act, is *a want of conformity to Divine rectitude;* or, *a defect in relation to the will of God;* or, *a failure in reference to Divine law.* These definitions amount, in effect, to the same thing. For there is no Divine law but what is conformable to the will of God; and His will is ever conformable to the rectitude of His nature. The root, the basis, the operative cause of every will is the nature of the person willing; and the immediate operative cause of every law is the will of the legislator. What deserves more particular notice is the *general nature* of the thing defined; and that is, a *want,* a *defect,* or a *failure,* each denoting a *negative* idea. If the general nature of moral evil were something *positive,* it would be ultimately from God, the only possible source of everything positive in the universe, whether being, principle, or act; which would lead to this absurdity, that evil, the worst of all evils, is a good thing. In every *sinful act* there are two things: first, the faculty of *will,* including a Divine *energy,* impelling it to seek its appropriate object, good, and to choose what appears to the intellect preferable, at the time of choosing. This is an excellence, a privilege, due to the moral agent, without which he could not be morally obliged. Secondly, there is a *defect,* a *want,* a *negative* principle; so that the agent either does not aim, in his election, at that end which conformity to rectitude requires, or else adopts a wrong, or an irregular means of attaining it. A perfectly good act implies a conformity in both these respects; but an act which is defective in either of them is morally evil. The path of rectitude is one; but the paths of error, or of moral delinquency, are many,—as numerous as are false ends and wrong means.

If this definition require any further explanation, we may observe, that if the agent had not in *himself* the *ground* of a failure, moral evil could not possibly take place. But as everything positive and efficient is from God, the cause of sin, or its ultimate origin, is not efficient but deficient. On the contrary, the prevention or counteraction of moral evil requires, in the nature of things, an efficient cause. Another consequence necessarily follows, that moral evil, or the sinfulness of a moral act, cannot be an object of any Divine decree; for it is absurd to sup-

pose that God has decreed anything which He would not, or could not consistently with His nature, effect; and yet, as a shadow is known by the substance to which it refers, so may moral evil be known to infinite intelligence, in every possible case, by the good to which it is opposed; and the foreknowledge of this ground of defectibility in all possible circumstances may give occasion to positive acts, Divine decrees, and operations.

By THE NATURE OF THINGS I mean, *what essentially belongs to God or to a creature.* There is not anything conceivable but what has a nature or essence; nor is there anything conceivable to which a nature belongs besides either God or a creature. Every idea, therefore, that can possibly occur must be included in this definition, as it cannot but refer either to the infinite God or to a finite creature. Some, indeed, consider "the nature of things" as a phrase denoting *established laws;* but with such a very confined sense of it I have at present no concern. Where this last idea occurs, I express it, for the sake of distinction, by either "the established laws of nature," or "the physical nature of things."

By a NEGATIVE CAUSE I understand, *a ground of certainty consisting in defect or limitation.* The terms *cause* and *power* denote commonly and properly a *positive* idea. The formation of language is progressive. As objects, qualities, actions or circumstances present themselves to the senses, or to the mind, mankind labour to designate ideas by articulate sounds, and afterwards by ocular signs. The sounds or signs are at first all arbitrary; by degrees they are habitually associated with ideas which are thought to be similar, in some respects, to others to which they were previously applied. But as new objects, qualities, properties, associations, and uses, are developed, new words are invented, or the same words are made to stand for different ideas; and the shades of difference are to be ascertained either from the nature of the subject, or from the relation they bear to other words. Though such terms as "cause" and "power" imply a degree of abstraction of thought and progressive improvement in language, yet the original positive import would easily attach itself to each advancing step of generalisation. Hence, in any language, there are comparatively but few terms calculated to express, unequivocally, *negative* ideas. However, closer investigations assure us that there are negative properties and relations which are a ground of certainty; though the strength of preceding associations, on the

one hand, and the poverty of language, on the other, render it extremely difficult to enunciate those ideas. This, I apprehend, accounts for the sentiment *assumed* by many celebrated divines and philosophers, that there is no ground of *certainty* but from a positive cause, a Divine decree. Hence the fruitless inquiries after the origin of moral evil, and the absurdity of imputing to the infinitely benevolent and just God an irrespective decree of reprobation, and a decree to permit moral evil. Still the use of the terms "cause" or "power," or of some term customarily applied to denote a certainty of effect or event, is unavoidable, (except new words are invented,) accompanied with some qualifying epithet, as negative, passive, deficient, or the like.

The preceding remarks are strongly applicable to the term *permission*. The term is positive, but the idea intended is, unquestionably, negative. To PERMIT, in a theological and moral acceptation, is *to suffer*, or *not to hinder*. The associations and prejudices above mentioned have operated so powerfully on the minds of some who revolted at the thought of ascribing to God a predestinating causality of moral evil, that they had recourse to a "*decree* to *permit*," preferring a contradiction in terms to impiety of sentiment. But, in reality, this is nothing better than taking shelter among the leaves of verbal ambiguity. No difficulty is removed by it, but the *idea* of Divine positive causation is retained, except that of *chance* be substituted as the ground of *certainty!* If there be not in a moral agent a negative ground of certainty, it is clearly impossible for permission to render anything certain. Besides, if a decree to permit convey any idea, it must be this, a decree not to hinder; and wherein does this differ from a decree not to decree? A decree not to create what has no ground of existence in itself is evidently absurd; for a mere possibility of existence is no ground of certainty of the event, if but permitted. And yet no less absurd is the notion of permitting the occurrence of moral evil, if there were not in the agent a negative cause, or ground of certainty, if not hindered. And if there be such a ground in case of permission or not hindering, the notion of a decree for the purpose has no use or meaning.

In fact, the idea of *permission*, clearly conceived, is of the utmost importance in theology and ethics; and it is an idea which this term is calculated very properly to express. The precise cause of embarrassment is the want of accurate acquaint-

ance with the doctrine of a negative ground of certainty,—in a word, the true origin of moral evil. The plain declarations of God's Holy Word, as far as necessary to salvation, are adapted to the level of the meanest capacity, where the heart is well disposed; but principles calculated to reconcile seeming discrepancies, to untie the knots of controversy, and to detect the sophistries of error, are of another kind. In these investigations it is of the utmost consequence to define both terms and things, except we wish to argue at uncertainty, or dispute in the dark. Geometricians have always been commended for paying so much attention to definitions; and the same conduct has been strenuously recommended, with most evident propriety, by Locke, and others, in reference to moral subjects. There is one circumstance, however, which has been, I apprehend, altogether overlooked: if Euclid had not given a definition of *negative ideas,* though couched under *positive terms,* his reasoning would have been inconclusive. He begins where theologians and moral philosophers are likely to *end.* A point, a line, and a superficies, all including *negations,* or nothing *related* to something, form the basis of all his demonstrations! And I will venture to affirm that, until a clear view of *negative causality* is entertained, moral science will always remain essentially incomplete, and polemical theology continue in ignoble shackles.

Section II.

Of Sovereignty, Necessity, Contingency, Modern Calvinism, and Modern Arminianism.

By SOVEREIGNTY, as a Divine prerogative and perfection, and as distinguished from equity, I understand, *a supreme right to will and to do whatever is not inconsistent with universal equity.* The idea intended may be variously expressed, but I know of no words better adapted to designate it in a brief manner. It may, however, be advantageous to represent the same thing in different lights, in order to avoid contention about words. The term sovereignty is sometimes used, in a loose sense, as synonymous with *supremacy;* but in the above definition a very different meaning is designed, which the reader is particularly requested to observe. Every attribute of Deity is supreme; but, properly speaking, every attribute of Deity is not sovereign. Supreme equity is the *highest* equity, and the same may be said of any other perfection, for each in God must be the highest. But *sovereign* equity, in the sense intended to be conveyed by the definition, would be a contradiction in terms; as much so as *arbitrary* equity. It is, in short, the idea of *arbitrariness* under the restriction of its not being inconsistent with universal equity and wisdom. As *arbitrary,* however, is often used for *capricious,* and among men in power for the exercise of unlawful authority, the term "sovereignty" is more reverential and appropriate than "arbitrariness," though with the before-mentioned limitation it expresses the same idea.

"Sovereignty" does not extend to the prevention or counteraction of any Divine purpose or decree; for this would imply that the purpose was changeable, was not formed in wisdom, and needed to be corrected. Antecedently to the consideration of a decree, many things,—substances, modifications, and arrangements,—very different from what take place in the universe, may be supposed to be within the prerogative of Divine sovereignty. Everything, doubtless, was decreed in infinite wisdom, and this excludes the idea of caprice in sovereign appointments. Prior to

the consideration of a Divine purpose, the contemplated salvation of men rather than fallen angels, or of those among men who will be actually saved, was merely possible; the certainty of the event depended, exclusively, on sovereign pleasure, directed by wisdom. But on the supposition of a Divine decree to do more for one creature than for another, the prerogative of sovereignty cannot be supposed, in any instance, to disannul that determination, without impeaching God's infinite wisdom, or absurdly supposing that sovereignty may militate against itself. In a word, its language is, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." The purpose is wise, as well as gracious, and therefore unalterable.

In regard to a *moral* system, as such, and every individual moral agent, whatever is not the effect of equity, *must of course* be the effect of sovereignty, in the sense defined. For to these two principles *everything*, as to the Divine conduct towards such a system, is ultimately reducible. Abstract from it equitable desert, and sovereign favour, and nothing remains. This position, as it relates to the conduct of God, to Christian knowledge, and to pious affections, is of the greatest importance. But as I never heard or saw it denied, a formal proof of it appears to be needless. My full conviction is, that the negation of it, in any given instance, may be reduced to some absurd consequence.

The punishment even of the guilty (much less of the innocent) is not an object of Divine sovereignty. To punish the guilty is the office of equity, which gives to all their due. For mercy to punish, or justice to confer undeserved favour, is discordant in thought and language; but not more so than sovereign punishment, without assuming another meaning of the term, or disputing about words. In brief, as *equity* never disapproves of any creature, especially a moral agent, where there is nothing *wrong*, or no *desert;* so, Divine *sovereignty* is in no case employed but for the *welfare* of its object. In proportion as any creature has no equitable claim upon God, all he is and possesses that may be denominated *good* must be the effect of sovereignty. This requires further illustration.

When we conceive of JEHOVAH adopting *one scheme* of things out of all possibles, (which the Divine intellect beheld in the all-sufficient essence,) it is evident that He must have exerted an act of high sovereignty. He could be under no obligation, except to Himself, the infinitely good and wise, to cause one

possible plan to become the object of His purpose, rather than another. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord," in this discrimination, "that He should have a counsellor?" It is not possible for a finite mind to comprehend all the grounds and ultimate reasons of the Divine pleasure and preference. He alone who knows all possible entities, all possible worlds, with all their differences, relations, and final results, and all this at the same instant, can penetrate the depth of sovereign choice; in regard either of the general plan itself, or of its contents, as to co-existence, relative subordination, and succession. And in executing this high and sovereign act of preference and purpose, God could be under no conceivable obligation, except to Himself, to fulfil His own wise decree. For the exercise of His wisdom, goodness, power, equity, and sovereignty, all things were originally formed, and now exist. "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

The same Divine prerogative pervades the conduct of *providence*. God is under no original obligation to any but Himself to preserve or perpetuate the existence of any creature. I said "original" obligation; because, if His infinite goodness and unerring wisdom decreed, and His condescension promised a prolonged or perpetual support, there is a sense in which intelligent creatures may be said to have a ground of claim for that support; and yet, even in these cases, the obligation, properly speaking, is to *Himself*, His wisdom in declaring, and veracity in performing. He is infinite truth, and therefore it is His glory that "He cannot lie," that "He cannot deny Himself." Hence "the heirs of promise" are furnished with a basis of "strong consolation."

We behold, moreover, the reign of sovereignty in the wonderful *difference* that subsists among creatures. Why, for instance, is one creature formed greater, stronger, handsomer, more intelligent or wise than another? Why are some made to suffer less than others for offences equal, or even greater, though none suffer beyond their due? Some of the most daring offenders are spared long, while others, who are not only free from gross crimes, but in a state of Divine acceptance, are visited (still within the limits of their deserts, in themselves considered) with great calamities, or premature death? One nation is left covered with thick darkness, while others are enlightened with revealed truth. Why was Abraham favoured in so transcendent a manner above all other

men of his day? Why were Moses and Aaron appointed to the high honours of legislation and the priesthood? Why was David raised to a kingdom, and Solomon endowed with superior wisdom? Why was Mary, rather than any other woman, chosen to be the mother of the Messiah? Why was Paul made so distinguished a herald to proclaim "the unsearchable riches of Christ?" These are but a few specimens of a sovereign providence, selected from a store equally wondrous and inexhaustible.

All the constituted *laws of nature* must be referred to this sublime prerogative of the Creator for their source. *Miracles* denote a temporary suspension or inversion of these constituted laws. And, as some of these were punitive and others merciful, in their design, the former, strictly speaking, were the effects of equity, and the latter of sovereignty. At the same time, those that were punitive in their design, as directed against the wicked, were mercifully overruled for the good of the righteous, as in the instances of Noah, Lot, Moses, and Aaron; and such as were merciful in their design, as those performed by Jesus Christ, were the innocent occasion of evil to the wicked. We may add, that every principle, act, and degree of holiness in a creature, and especially in fallen man, must necessarily claim the same origin—sovereign grace. The connexion of moral and natural evil is as indissoluble, according to the original constitution and course of things, as any cause and its appropriate effect in the physical world; and the suspension of the effect in the former case requires as real a miracle as any supernatural suspension does in the latter. This doctrine the principles of moral science abundantly substantiate; and the Scriptures, where they speak of grace as a new creation, a new birth, a resurrection, and the like, afford it a striking illustration.

At the *final judgment*, which is the closing scene of probation, there will be, according to the scriptural account, a wonderful display of sovereignty, as well as equity. Who among the saints will say, or can say, that the reward does not far exceed the strict desert of their service and obedience? While none shall have reason to complain that they are treated unjustly, some—washed from the foulest stains, justified, sanctified, and saved, for the sake of the Lord Jesus, and by the operation of the Divine Spirit—will be invited in strains of sovereign pleasure, and admitted to "inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world." And, finally, to this prerogative we

must refer the *promised resurrection* of the body. This miracle will be to the righteous a distinguished favour, but to the wicked an occasion of equitable punishment. The doctrine appeared to the heathen philosophers, some of whom disputed with Paul at Athens, an incredible fancy; nor should we be surprised at it, while they remained ignorant of the miraculous power of God. For, short of a supernatural act, what can be supposed to effect so astonishing a change? And how could a future miracle be known, with any degree of certainty, but by a Divine revelation?

The term NECESSITY, and the ideas intended to be designated by it, have been productive of many voluminous disputes; but with the sentiments of others I do not at present interfere. By NECESSITY, in its most comprehensive notion, I understand *that by which anything either* IS, *or* COMES TO PASS. The attentive reader will observe, that the idea of necessity, according to the first part of this definition, is more universal than that of *cause;* for we may say, with propriety, that God *is*, has a nature and perfections, by, from, or of necessity. The word cause has no meaning but as it stands related to some *effect;* but God, whether in His nature, being, or properties, is not an effect in any sense. It is His glory, His adorable pre-eminence, that He is uncaused. Besides, the notion of a *first* cause, which belongs to Him exclusively, evidently precludes that of a prior cause. The idea of the Divine necessity is included in that of *possibility.* What is not possible cannot be necessary; but if an *eternal* existence be possible, it is also necessary, for it never can *begin* to exist.

The definition also includes "that by which anything *comes to pass.*" And here the idea of necessity coincides with that of causality; for nothing "comes to pass" without an adequate cause. Nothing takes its rise, or begins to be, without a causal origin. It is an ancient, approved, and an incontrovertible axiom, that "there is no effect without a cause." We are, therefore, sure, that whatever "comes to pass" has a *causal* necessity. It has, however, been shewn that there is, in the nature of things, a *negative* as well as a positive causality. We may, therefore, conclude, that all necessity is reducible to these two ideas: that by which a thing *is;* and that by which a thing is *caused* to be. The former relates only to God, the latter only to a creature.

The same subject may be viewed in another light, still included in the definition. All necessity is either by nature or by will.

Thus it is the *nature* of God to exist of necessity, and to be infinitely perfect; and it is the *nature* of a creature to be dependent, limited, defectible, and comparatively imperfect, of necessity. No will can alter these properties; therefore they "come to pass" by necessity of nature. Indeed, the existence and positive properties of every creature are effects of Divine will; for which there can be no other assignable cause. It was at the option of the Creator to give them; but not so, that any creature should exist, or even be contemplated as possible, without *negative* properties, as a contrast to, or a denial of His own. He alone is possessed of infinity, independence, all-sufficiency, and immutability; no other can possibly possess them; the supposition of the contrary involves the denial of the Divine unity and infinitude: consequently, by a necessity of nature, to the exclusion of will, every creature in the universe must exist without them.

There is also a necessity of what "comes to pass" by *will*. For instance, the universe of created beings—from the highest intelligence to the lowest reptile, from that glorious orb, the sun, to the smallest atom—could have no other necessity of existence but the will of the Creator. "For His pleasure they are and were created;" to shew forth the glory of His nature and perfections; or, in one word, His Godhead. But let us confine the illustration of necessity by will to man. The human BODY is subject to the common laws, or the appointed modes of operation, of material elements; such as gravitation, cohesion, and fermentation; whence ensue putrefaction, and the dissolution of its form. By the same Divine will and appointment, it is necessitated, while the organs are perfect, by vibratory motions from objects of sense; thus we are necessarily affected by what we see, hear, smell, taste, and feel. It is, moreover, subject to many other involuntary motions. Again, the Divine will has also subjected the human MIND, in some respects, to necessity. It has that kind, that degree, and that perpetuity of existence which the will of God has determined. Man, indeed, as a free agent, is suffered to vary the mode of his continuance, as to body and mind; but he cannot deprive himself of *being*. This depends on the will of the Creator, who has imposed upon it a necessity of duration, according to His own sovereign pleasure; and what that duration is, He has clearly revealed.

It is of importance to add, that the human mind is also necessitated, by the supreme will, according to a general law of its

constitution, to seek truth and happiness. It is not compatible with its structure, that it should seek either falsehood or misery for its own sake. The understanding, though often wretchedly bewildered, still seeks truth; and the will, though still oftener miserably deceived, seeks good, and chooses what appears to be so, as its happiness. No condition, no art, no evasion, no conceivable moral freedom, can divest the will of a necessity of acting according to its nature, or the constitution of the willing faculty by Divine appointment, which is ever wise and benevolent. When an object is presented, the will necessarily either chooses or rejects it; suspends the choice or does not suspend it; loves or does not love it; desires or does not desire it. It is free to choose one thing rather than another, but not to choose contrary things, as to speak and to be silent, to walk and to be at rest, at the same time. And it is necessitated to make its elections out of the repository of its own knowledge, or from the objects or considerations with which the person is acquainted. "What can we reason," or what can we choose, "but from what we know," or think we know? In these respects, a necessity is laid upon us by the wise and benevolent will of our Creator, for which we should be grateful; for were it otherwise, we could not be rational and intelligent beings.

As there is no effect without a causal necessity; as moral evil is an effect, or, according to the definition, what "comes to pass;" and as all necessity is reducible to either that of nature or that of Divine will; it is an interesting question, to which of these must we ascribe moral evil, or the *sinfulness* of a moral act? Most assuredly, not to the will of God, who opposes, hates, and condemns it. He wills the existence, the positive properties, the constituted faculties, in short, everything excellent in all creatures; for without His purpose and energy they could have no being. These do not oppose, but harmonise with His holy nature; but moral evil is an opposition to His holiness and infinite rectitude. It must, therefore, proceed ultimately, in connexion with free-will, from the other causal necessity, that of essential defect and limitation; or from that negative principle, that root of mutability, which is inseparably attached to every created nature. But, as all creatures are under the control of the Divine will, we are not to confound mutability with an actual change, or defectibility with defection, as if it were not within the province of supreme will to

prevent the consequence that might ensue from this negative property. Thus it does not follow, that because angels and glorified men are in their own nature mutable, that they will really change for the worse; or because they are defectible, that actual defection will take place. The very notion of a negative property, or principle of mutability, implies that the being to which it is related may be so aided, strengthened, or purified, as to prevent its actual expansion, when it pleases the all-sufficient and infinitely wise God to communicate what is adequate to the occasion. And this He does in countless millions of instances. What would become of the best of men upon earth, what would become of the purest and most exalted spirits in heaven, if *left to themselves?* This language is applicable to all:—"Hold thou us up, and we shall be safe."

Having so fully explained the ideas conveyed by the term necessity, it is of little moment to inquire whether any of them may be expressed by another word. Some have preferred the term *certainty;* but I can perceive no reason for the preference but in one of these two considerations: first, some advantage which the term affords in the argument *ad hominem* with those who admit of the certainty of events as predicted and foreseen, and which cannot therefore be absolutely contingent or fortuitous; secondly, it is a substitute for a term which must appear objectionable to those (and to those only) who are unacquainted with negative causality. Such persons have no idea of causal necessity, but as either blind fate or arbitrary appointment. Certainty they cannot deny, without renouncing prediction and the Divine prescience; but it should be considered, that all certainty must have a cause, and until this be ascertained, the difficulty is not accounted for, nor in any measure obviated. In their account, nothing is foreseen but because it is fore-appointed; and thus their notion of necessity is confined to that of will. When the leaves of verbosity are removed, and the idea is disclosed, it imputes moral evil to God's appointment, though its advocates disapprove of the consequence of their own statement. The preceding representation of necessity fairly removes this consequence; while, at the same time, it disclaims and precludes the idea of absolute contingency.

The term CONTINGENCY designates a relative idea; the same thing may be contingent, understanding thereby its not being foreknown in its proper cause, to one being, which is not so to another. It

would be infinitely degrading to the all-wise God to suppose that *anything* is contingent to Him. While we foreknow nothing as infallibly certain, respecting creatures in their own nature mutable, defectible, and free, except by Divine information; God's prescience is so absolute, and so universal, as to comprehend everything: "His understanding is infinite." Hence, as two effects are not precisely the same, we may be certain there was a reason, or some cause of the difference, though we may be unable to perceive the mode of its operation. If there were any effect contingent to God, it would be an effect without a cause; and then we might consistently affirm, that the universe exists without a cause; a sentiment as absurd as it is impious.

With a view to countenance the absolute contingency of moral actions, it has been stated that though omniscience is an attribute of Deity, He may *choose* not to foreknow at least some events. Though omnipotence, say the abettors of this opinion, is a Divine attribute, God does not choose to do all that He could do; and thus, it may be, though omniscience is a Divine attribute, God does not choose to know, by way of prescience, in what manner a free agent will determine his acts, as good or evil. This is extremely fallacious, for want of distinguishing what is the appropriate character and object of each attribute. The object of omnipotence is an effect, and it is the glory of God that He *cannot* produce all effects; He "cannot lie," He "cannot deny himself," He cannot give existence to an eternal, independent, all-sufficient, and immutable being. Though it is within the province of omnipotence to produce greater effects than any we can comprehend, we are certain it does not extend to what is absolutely infinite. As all effects are necessarily finite, so must be the operations of omnipotence. As the existence of God himself, and His perfections, are not objects on which omnipotence can exert itself; so neither can any object equal to Himself be produced by it. An infinite effect is a contradiction.

But what are the appropriate objects of omniscience? Are these necessarily limited, like those of power? That supreme power can produce what is infinite is, as before remarked, an absolute impossibility. But why? because it is not an object of power any more than God himself is an effect. Whereas God's omniscience relates to Himself, His infinite existence and attributes, no less than to creatures. It is the perfection of His nature, that He

knows all things and effects; and any limitation of knowledge would imply an imperfection. Is it an object of *choice* whether God be possessed or divested of an infinite perfection? Were it practicable, would it be to His honour that it should be limited? How is it possible for omnipotence to convert an infinite object to circumstances of limitation? In fine, it is the proper character of omnipotence, that it relates only to effects; but omniscience is related also to infinity, embracing all objects. And as the proper character of omniscience is that it comprehends, as its object, absolute infinity, without which it would be imperfect; therefore, *à fortiori*, it must comprehend everything finite. It extends to all that is *possible*, as implied in infinite wisdom, much more to all that is actual. If it be the proper character of omniscience to comprehend what omnipotence could not possibly produce, as God Himself and His infinite perfections; much more does it comprehend all the effects of the supreme power, and everything, both positive and negative, to which they stand related. Besides, absolute contingency would not be favoured by this invention, if admitted; for if the suspension of prescience were voluntary, God might have foreknown future contingencies if He would, and therefore there must be some ground of that possible prescience. Consequently, the supposition is not only infinitely unworthy of the Divine perfection, but also totally useless for the intended purpose.

In this work the terms *Calvinism* and *Arminianism* sometimes occur. They are employed, however, only as convenient terms of distinction. We acknowledge no authority in matters of faith but the testimony of God in His word; nor any umpire in matters of reasoning, but the evidence of principles and the force of argument. At the reformation from Popery, John Calvin drew up institutes of religious sentiments, the general character of which nearly resembles that of the sentiments of Augustine, in a very methodical, perspicuous, and elegant form. They contain, indeed, some particulars respecting the Divine purpose, and a few subordinate points, which, I apprehend, are not consistent with the true meaning of Scripture, and which are incapable of support on sound principles. On the doctrines of grace he is admirably clear, scriptural, and argumentatively strong. Here he had *positive* ground. But when he touches on reprobation, free-will, the event of sin, and, in short, those points which depend on a proper

knowledge of *negative* causality, his positions are bold and rash, and the consequences alarming. When these positions and consequences came, after his decease, to be discussed with freedom, James Arminius rendered himself conspicuous, and he, with many others, recoiled to the opposite extreme. These advanced principles and deduced conclusions calculated to give countenance to the exploded dogmas of Pelagius, and to veil the glory of sovereign grace.

In these remarks, I have no reference to private character, or to ministerial labour, on either side: it may be observed, however, that, in controversy, the one party employed its whole strength to defend the grace of God; and the other to vindicate man's free-will, as essential to moral government. It is, nevertheless, remarkable, that Arminius, and the Remonstrants, in opposing Calvinism, were as uninformed respecting the doctrine of *negative* causation as Calvin himself; and, therefore, it is not surprising that the difficulties pressed by the parties respectively on each other, should remain unsolved. Without appropriate principles, by which the seeming inconsistencies of Scripture on these points may be reconciled, there can be no sufficient evidence; and without such evidence there can be no fair solution of the difficulties in debate. On the whole, the doctrines, as exhibited by Calvin, resemble a noble structure built upon a rock, with some of the upper parts left insecure; and as exhibited by Arminius, a fair building erected partly on a rock, and partly on sand. The former may need reparation, but the latter, however specious, must be rebuilt. Nevertheless, in a practical point of view, as the advocates of both systems maintain on the subjects in debate the paramount authority of the Holy Scriptures, and agree in many important topics of revealed truth, much good may be done on each side, where the power of these common truths prevails, and when the Spirit of God applies them.

By MODERN CALVINISM I would be understood to mean, *that system of religion which represents the sovereignty of Divine grace, without encroaching on the equity of Divine government.* For instance, it represents God as decreeing all the good in the created universe, but, in a strict and absolute sense, no evil; as predestinating some to life and salvation, without being unjust to any; as foreseeing all things, without appointing sin; as bestowing grace, in perfect consistency with the freedom, the absolute freedom, of

the human will in its moral actions. It maintains justification by faith, without depreciating good works; the certainty of the event of salvation, consistently with the use of means; in few words, the glories of the Divine prerogative in bestowing good, in a manner perfectly consistent with moral obligation, and the honours of Divine justice in punishing none but those who deserve punishment, and according to the degree of their desert.

By MODERN ARMINIANISM I mean, *that system of religion which represents the equity of Divine government in such a manner as to encroach on the sovereignty of Divine grace;* that is, in such a manner as to renounce the prerogative of communicating any favour, and particularly a gracious influence, to whom, when, how, and in what degree the sovereign and all-wise God pleases. For example, it rejects a predestination to life, to grace and glory, as if it were unworthy of God; it founds the Divine prescience of good in man on his self-determining power, as if the gift of preventing grace were no part of the Divine prerogative, nor consistent with human liberty. In brief, by Modern Arminianism I understand those doctrines which are maintained in the writings of Dr Whitby and Mr Fletcher. In the former of these authors we find the Arminian sentiments reduced to a regular system, defended by extensive learning and acuteness, arrayed in scholastic formalities, and closed with an appeal to the Christian fathers; in the latter, we have the same opinions in a more popular form, ornamented with the flowers of rhetoric, with a singular intermixture of piety and passion. As, however, the writer was not an "evil man and a seducer," he did not "grow worse and worse," but, as he advanced in his polemical career, his doctrine became more conciliatory, and his temper more candid.

CHAPTER III.

OF MORAL GOVERNMENT, AS IT RELATES TO THE SUPREME GOVERNOR; MAN THE SUBJECT OF IT; AND THE RULE BY WHICH HE IS GOVERNED.

SECTION I.

Of Moral Government, as it relates to the Supreme Governor.

IT was an interesting question, implying a strong affirmative, which Abraham "the friend of God" expressed, when contemplating the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* Most, if not all the errors which have existed in the Church of God originated in false notions respecting the Divine character. He, however, enacts no laws which are absolutely impracticable, and passes no judgment but according to truth. And while He does nothing but what is right, He possesses a sovereign prerogative of conferring favours according to His unerring wisdom.

For a clearer apprehension of the subject, we should remember that the office of a governor consists of two parts: the exercise of *justice,* in the character of a *judge;* and the exercise of *benevolence,* in the character of a *benefactor.* Though the same person may act as a judge and as a benefactor, yet the offices themselves are perfectly distinct; and are to be ascertained from the relation they bear to their objects respectively. Nor can it be questioned that the same object may be at once under the influence of benevolence and of justice. Thus God, in reference to individuals as well as to communities, "in the midst of judgment remembers mercy." It may seem, at first sight, that the character of a governor, exercising prerogative, as distinguished from the office

* Gen. xviii. 25.

of a judge, amounts to something more than the exercise of benevolence. But this, I conceive, is a mistake arising from false notions associated with the idea of royal prerogative, and which has been among men the exuberant source of tyranny, oppression, and persecution in all ages. There is, accurately, no royal prerogative, whether human or Divine, but for the *good* of the subject; for when good laws are transgressed, the governor exercises only the office of a judge in punishing the transgressor. When bad laws among men are disobeyed, and the offender is punished for disobeying them, one tyrannic act, implied in the formation of bad laws, is followed by another. But far be this from "the Judge of all the earth;" as His laws are perfectly "holy, just, and good," so He punishes none but those who transgress them. He exercises no prerogative to impose unrighteous laws, or to treat the innocent as if they were guilty.

The proper office of a judge is to administer justice according to law, or to give to every one his due. Sometimes, indeed, among mankind, a portion of the royal prerogative is added to the office of a judge, in order to avoid the inconvenience of appealing to the throne, where judgment and mercy are supposed to be united. From these considerations it is plain, that a king, or any chief magistrate, is a faint representation of the Supreme Governor, by whom "kings reign, and princes decree justice." He is their sublime and perfect model; and happy would it be for the world, if all governors were intent on imitating Him who is at once an equitable Judge and a kind Benefactor!

Jehovah is the King of all kings, and the Judge of all judges. He is *supreme* in His nature, in all His attributes, and in all His proceedings, in the exercise of judgment and of mercy. But His royal prerogative, His wise and holy sovereignty, He exercises only as a Benefactor. He is the *universal* Governor: He rules among "the armies of heaven," as well as among "the inhabitants of the earth." Heaven, earth, and hell, are unveiled before Him, and under His righteous and beneficent control. He is the *final* Governor: when subjects, magistrates, and princes shall have gone from the earth to their eternal abodes, and the remembrance of them shall have vanished as a dream, God will reign on an unshaken throne. He will still sustain the office of Governor, a sovereign Benefactor, and an equitable Judge, while heaven and hell are peopled by angels and men. From Him there lies no ap-

peal; and as it is the final, so it is the most perfect decision. For He is an *infallible* Governor: He will by no means "clear the guilty" as a Judge, nor will He condemn the innocent by prerogative. "He accepteth not persons, nor taketh rewards," could anything be offered to Him which He had not previously bestowed. He is "a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and right is He." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

From these remarks may we not clearly perceive the mistake of those who ascribe sovereignty to the character of a judge? What seems to have occasioned this error is the confounding of the idea of sovereignty with that of supremacy. Both ideas, indeed, belong to a chief governor, but they refer to two offices in a divided sense; supremacy belongs to each, but sovereignty only to one. It is true, in common discourse, these terms are sometimes taken interchangeably; and hence, because a governor is a sovereign, it is hastily inferred that he is so in the whole of his character, which includes the ideas of a benefactor and a judge. A similar confusion of ideas has occasioned many abuses in human governments. How many weak tyrannical governors have inferred, and would have had the governed to infer, that because they were acknowledged to be sovereigns, they were so in all respects, and had authority, in virtue of their character, to enact what laws they pleased, and to compel the observance of them by penal sanctions! Did they not, as universally conceded, derive their office from the appointment of God, and were they not His representatives on earth? Every one, therefore, who disobeyed their mandates, right or wrong in themselves, was justly punished. This is the true spirit of tyranny, whether among ecclesiastics or civilians. The Divine character, however, is founded on different principles.

Much has been said on the subject of arbitrary *will*, and arbitrary *authority*, but often without proper discrimination. If, indeed, by the term arbitrary be meant capricious, to the exclusion of a wise regard to the public welfare, the notion deserves unqualified censure; but if it express the idea of a sovereign right to exercise mercy in subserviency to the public good, or to confer undeserved favours, without injury to others, then we should beware of attaching to it any odium. A will or an authority may be just, without being sovereign; but *sovereign injustice*, when reduced to practice, is inexpressibly detestable. An arbitrary government

that infringes upon right, to the injury of the community or of any individual, is directly opposed to the character of God.

From the view we have taken of the Divine character, and the twofold office it contains, we may perceive a scriptural, rational, and safe rule, whereby all the mixtures of good and evil among accountable beings may be referred to their respective sources. It is plain that good and evil, judgment and mercy, suffering and enjoyment, grief and happiness, pain and pleasure, are singularly blended, even in the same person, and at the same time. To say that they all proceed from one source, either in ourselves or in God, is very convenient for preventing further exertion of thought and reflection; but it is at the expense of truth, and to the detriment of improvement in Christian knowledge. How then shall we analyse this compound? by what test shall we ascertain its component parts? The subject, all but infidels must allow, is infinitely more interesting than any that ever can be investigated in the material world. If we would obtain clear and consistent ideas, in contemplating the moral world, we should consider what is *strictly due* to the object in question. Are existence, preservation, health and vigour, mental powers, morally good principles, and confirmed happiness, due to a creature, especially when fallen? Who is so ignorant or so vain as to assert it? They proceed, therefore, from God as a Sovereign, or as a supreme Benefactor. Do any suffer pain or punishment, grief or sorrow, of any kind, or in any degree? Let the question be put, Is it their due to be exempt? And, indeed, if we take a wider survey, and contemplate every animal that breathes, every insect that moves, every vegetable that grows, every atom that exists, compared with what is greater, better, more beautiful, or has any degree of superiority; the question may be still put, Why is this object inferior to another, why does it bear a subordinate part in the system of the world? The true answer is, Nothing more, nothing better is due to it. View the whole scale of created existence, from the highest intelligence to the lowest particle, and the same reply is applicable. On the other hand, if we take the same survey, and put the question in the reversed order, Does any being or thing partake of a greater sum of existence, a more elegant form, or superior advantages, compared with what is inferior? In that degree it has more than is due to it, from sovereign bounty. In brief, in

proportion as any creature has *more* than nothing, or a mere negation, it is the effect of *sovereign liberality;* and in proportion as the same creature has *less* than ulterior perfection, it is the effect of *equity.* So that these Divine characters of equity and sovereignty reign not only in a moral system, but through the whole system of the universe.

In this manner we may safely argue, on indubitable principles, respecting the kingdom of providence, over which the Supreme Governor presides. Sometimes, for instance, the weaker animals are oppressed or devoured by the stronger; but protection, protracted existence, and a favourable mode of being, are not due to the weaker from their great Proprietor; nor are the stronger, if not intelligent free agents, accountable to Him. Man is the vicegerent of his Maker in this world, in point of dominion and government, though greatly degenerated by sin. As a free agent, he is capable of abusing his authority, both towards his own species and other creatures which are under his control, or at his disposal. For the exercise of this dominion he is accountable to the Lord of all. He has a grant from Him to "slay and eat," but not for wanton and merely selfish ends. He is allowed to use inferior creatures for his real improvement in subordination to God's glory, but not capriciously to abuse anything with impunity.

This important subject affords many useful and practical reflections:—

First, We may discover a source of humiliation and calm submission under our sufferings. Of humiliation; because we deserve all we suffer, and much more. We may pertinently ask, Why should "a living man complain;" a sinful man, whose demerits are so great? Of submission; because the righteous Judge cannot do wrong. He inflicts no evil, He suffers no ill to befall us, but what justice requires, in reference to our unworthiness in His sight, even when the infliction is most oppressive and cruel on the part of wicked men. These are accountable to the Supreme Governor, who knows how to overrule all our sufferings, even unto death, for our good and His own glory. In short, for any creature to be exposed to the evil of suffering, when not in any respect deserved, would be contrary to infinite rectitude.

Secondly, From the view we have taken of the Supreme Governor we may infer, that all *discriminating* favours conferred on the subjects of His government proceed from sovereignty, as it respects

them, but from equity as it respects Himself. For example, a predestination to eternal happiness of some of the fallen human race is of His mere "good pleasure," as it respects their original desert, their prior state and character; but it is a matter of right or equity, when the Divine character is the object of consideration. In other words, it is infinitely *due* to God, that He should confer benefits on any creature under the direction of unerring wisdom, though such benefits are not *due* to their objects. The same is true as it regards a mitigation of deserved punishment, or of any suffering; and the rule is applicable to restraining favour. These are not due to us; but it is due to infinite benevolence to dispense favours according to wisdom. In brief, God as a Sovereign conducts Himself towards His subjects in a manner irrespective of their merit or demerit; but as an equitable Judge He regards merely what is their due, according to the laws of His government, which are founded in truth and righteousness. Are favours conferred on any persons, at any time, in any manner, or to any degree? It is due to infinite perfection to do this. Are any privations, pains, or sufferings experienced, or are the guilty consigned to misery without end? It is due to infinite perfection to exercise justice in this way.

Thirdly, We perceive an adequate ground of acquiescence in the decision of God, "when He judgeth," in all possible cases. It cannot be that He who is infinitely perfect should act in a manner unworthy of Himself. The infallible rectitude of His conduct and decision is founded on the rectitude of His nature; for every will operates according to the nature of the person willing. And even supposing it possible for Him to do wrong, what could induce Him to deviate from universal righteousness and equity? When a human judge departs from the rule of absolute right, it is either because the law according to which he judges is not perfect, or from his own ignorance, prejudice, envy, or malice, for the sake of gain, partial honour, or the like; but as the "righteous Judge" has no imperfect law as His rule, so He "cannot be tempted of evil," nor has He any conceivable, any possible inducements to act unworthily.

Fourthly, We may see the true sources of heaven and hell, or ultimate happiness and misery. Heaven, with all its happiness, proceeds from, and is supported by sovereign benevolence, the direction of which to its objects, according to wisdom, is the right

of God, as due to His nature. But hell, with all its misery, proceeds from moral evil as the demerit of the sufferers, and from Divine holiness and justice directed against the rebellious subjects of equitable government. "The *wages* of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The songs of the blessed in heaven resound to the praise of grace, mercy, and love:—"Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." The wailings of the miserable in hell are, Thou art a hard master, too holy, too just, too powerful; thou art a consuming fire, and thy opposition to us is intolerable. We inhabit outer darkness, the den of foul fiends, unquenchable flames. Our worm never dieth. Here restless confusion, gloomy reflections, conscious agonies, and rebellious, fruitless opposition, ever torment us.

Fifthly, In the preceding views of the Divine character as a Governor we find a fair solution to many popular, and some subtle objections. For example, it has been asked, Does not election imply "accepting persons?" By no means; for all must allow, it is a part of sovereign prerogative to confer benefits, provided that conduct be founded on reasons of wisdom. No one is wronged, because the discriminating favour is not *due* to any one. Again, it has been asked, Does not the limitation or mitigation of deserved punishment argue "unjust partiality?" Not in the least; for this also is a branch of sovereign prerogative. In all such instances God proceeds according to the rule of right, or what is due to His infinite nature. Some, indeed, have contended that punishment is the act of a sovereign. But for this there is no ground, except in the equivocal and less proper use of that expression, when taken for the operation of supreme justice towards the guilty. To punish is, indubitably, the office of a judge, or the exercise of justice with respect to guilt incurred; and the offence is not a decreed effect. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." In the object there is a just cause of displeasure, which

neither was nor could be decreed; and therefore it is not a matter of *sovereign* pleasure that suffering should follow sin unpardoned and guilt unremoved. In short, the evil of suffering is the necessary effect of being found guilty and sinful; as necessary as that God is unchangeably holy and just. If indeed sinful demerit were decreed to take place, then punishment would be so too in a direct manner.

Let the reader seriously reflect, whether he deliberately rejects God as "his portion," and holiness as the way to the enjoyment of His favour and friendship; whether he cleaves to idols of his own imagination, and seeks the "water of life" from the "broken cisterns" of created good. If so, God's nature, His holiness and justice, His infinite rectitude, stand opposed to him. The moth which encounters a devouring flame must be consumed. Let no one excuse himself from a vain and unfounded supposition that a sovereign decree cannot be resisted; for he who lives and dies in the service of sin requires no decree to insure his misery. Let none say, "If our transgressions and sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" for God has formed no unconditional decree to punish any one, as if all attempts at conversion were useless. Thus saith the Lord, "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die?"

Section II.

Of Man as a Subject of God's Moral Government.

Man may be contemplated in two principal points of view: either as he was *created*, or as he is actually found to be in his *present* state. As to the first of these, the inspired history of his formation states, that he was made "in the image" or "after the likeness" of the Creator; and an inspired interpreter of that history assures us, that this likeness consisted in "knowledge, righteousness, and holiness." The original account is, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness; . . . . so God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."* In allusion to this sacred record, St Paul represents real Christians as having "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." † And elsewhere, when exhorting to a spiritual renovation of the mind, he adds, "and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."‡ On these passages of Holy Writ, we may remark: that the subject of this likeness must, from the nature of the case, be infinitely inferior to the original; that the "image or likeness" refers not to man's corporeal form, but to his mental capacities and endowments; that it consisted partly in an exalted kind of *intellect*, which was capable of contemplating not only sensible objects, but also the adorable Creator and spiritual realities; that this capable intellect was furnished with actual knowledge suited to its nature, and especially a knowledge of God as the chief good; that the heart or nature of man was perfectly righteous, or strictly conformable to the holy will and nature of God; that he was endowed with the faculty of will and moral freedom, whereby he was capacitated to choose the good and refuse the evil, according to the representation of his intellect; and, finally, that in his original constitution, he chose God as his chief end, and every other object in subserviency to this end, whereby all his faculties and their exercise were truly holy.

* Gen. i. 26, 27, v. 1, 2. † Col. iii. 10. ‡ Eph. iv. 24.

From this representation, founded on the testimony of Scripture, and which right reason cannot but approve, it appears that man, as a subject of moral government, in a state of original probation, had a CAPACITY of enjoying the chief good, which capacity includes intellect and will; and being then perfect, he actually enjoyed the chief good, and every inferior good in a regular subordination to that higher end. He had, moreover, suitable and sufficient objective MEANS to preserve that enjoyment. Being perfectly holy, he was also completely happy. In the harmony of his powers and passions there was not one jarring chord; not one of the numerous objects around him was either over-valued or under-valued. Every disposition, every inclination, every thought and desire, every volition and action, was exactly as it ought to be. This was the state, the intelligent, righteous, and holy state of Adam and Eve before their first transgression. "God made man upright." And "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was VERY GOOD."

But is this the present state of man? Sad experience, it is too evident, proves the contrary. This is the other point of view in which man should be contemplated. Let us, then, endeavour to observe mankind with calm attention and the most impartial discernment. It is allowed that the external actions of men are the best evidences to us of their dispositions and their true state. Scriptural statements of human depravity are very strong and abundant; but those who have a preconceived hypothesis to support, exert their critical ingenuity to lessen their evidence, or to explain them away. "Facts," however, "are stubborn things;" and as an appeal is made to reason, we need not shrink from its legitimate principles as one medium of proof. And, first, if man be not degenerated, that is, if he have not transgressed the line of perfect moral rectitude, he is possessed of a beatifying knowledge of supreme excellence; every act of his will is conformable to the will and holy nature of God; nor are there any conflicts or discordant propensities of the passions. Every object is exactly estimated and deliberately chosen in such a manner as to be followed with perfect satisfaction, and without any regret upon reflection. His freedom in no instance is abused, and his conscience must never reproach him for a wrong election. Secondly, if it be found a fact that the chief good is neglected or under-valued, then the path of moral rectitude is transgressed; and if this be a uni-

versal fact, including every person from earliest life, (and how soon do we mark selfishness and other wrong tempers in days of infancy?) it forms an irrefragable proof that all mankind are degenerate. This statement, in general, cannot, I conceive, be controverted; nor does there appear, among the present race of men, any plea of individual exception.

The appeal is now made to impartial reason, whether the verdict of inspired documents be not the language of sobriety and truth, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" and that "there is none righteous, no not one," in the same manner and to the same degree as the first human pair. Where is the human being who can consistently assert, that he is what he ought to be, without begging the question that his defects and failures are of Divine causation? Remove this preposterous assumption, and every one must stand convicted, even in his own judgment, at the bar of his own reason, that he is a delinquent, a transgressor of Divine law, and therefore obnoxious to its awful sanctions. The rule of moral actions is perfect, but man in his present state is imperfect; consequently he lies exposed to its righteous penalty. The darkness of his understanding and the depravity of his disposition, be the degree what it may, by no means excuse him from subjection to the Moral Governor. His departure from perfect moral rectitude makes no difference in his obligation; otherwise it would follow, either that he was incapable of abusing his liberty without, at the same time, freeing himself from future obligations, or that on such an abuse God is bound to restore him immediately to perfect rectitude, in order to qualify him for being obliged; each of which is absurd. In reality, the more an inclination to obey is wanting, the more culpable he is; which must be the case, except we say that our moral ability remains the same after disobedience as it was before: and then it would follow that our moral ability for obedience undergoes, in that respect, no inconvenience from innumerable transgressions; which is directly contrary to the well-known fact of moral habits.

From the preceding considerations it appears, that the present moral state of man is very different from what it was when he was created, as to knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Nevertheless, this by no means implies that his *natural faculties* of understanding and will have lost any property essential to them. The most erroneous mind, in a moral sense, may have a great

vigour of intellect, and a great force of will. Nor is man's *freedom*, in the sense before explained, diminished or altered. Many, indeed, and especially the first Protestant Reformers, have strenuously contended that since the first apostasy the human will is *enslaved*. On a slight view, these two statements appear to be discrepant; but in reality they are not, because they refer to different things. For as the freedom asserted is a negative idea, denoting exemption from constraint and restraint, it is predicated of the will as a privilege from God; and the meaning is, that HE does not enslave it. But when it is asserted that the will is enslaved, the meaning is, that it is under the influence and direction of a depraved heart and a dark understanding. On the part of God, therefore, the will is ever free, through every stage of human existence; but on the part of man's internal principle of action, it is enslaved in proportion to the moral depravity of that principle, because the operations of the will are invariably as the representations of the understanding and the principle of the agent.

In this connexion it may be useful to trace and illustrate the respective operations of the understanding and the will of man in his present state of imperfection, in reference to his moral actions, in order to discover the ground of their criminality, the equity of their condemnation, and our need of pardoning mercy and assisting grace. We have seen that man, in his original state of perfection, was possessed of such a degree of spiritual knowledge as was adequate to a state of righteousness and true holiness. He must have had an illuminating principle, by which he had a spiritual apprehension of God, and of all other objects presented to him. Whether these were many or few, he regarded them all in subserviency to God and his own happiness. But in the present state, abstracted from a gracious principle, we daily find, by indubitable experience, the following facts:—First, That the understanding is enveloped in *ignorance of God*, and of the value of other objects as related to Him. "The foolish heart is darkened." Its pristine light resembled that of open day, or the unclouded sun at noon; but that of our present unrenovated state resembles more a torch or a candle in a dark night. It should be particularly noticed that this mental power, the understanding, in the degenerate state of man, has no apprehension of *God in His own light*, even when heard of "by the hearing of the ear." And when any one destitute of this light speaks of Him, he only "darkens counsel by

words without knowledge." The excellence of His nature, and the glories of His perfections, are not perceived. Secondly, This darkness of the understanding is the *natural effect* of transgression, and not the result of an arbitrary judgment from God; as if He inflicted on His erring creature some positive influence in the way of punishment. The truth is, that he is left to himself by his equitable Governor. He was neither allured nor impelled to a state of darkness by his Maker; but he withdrew himself from the light by preferring those objects which have obscured his mind. Thirdly, The understanding makes but a mere *representation* of such objects as are in view of the mind, they having no active influence on the will; and, therefore, such representation, whether the objects be few or many, does not insure the right use of them. Indeed, to produce this effect was never the province of the understanding in a state of perfection, and therefore cannot be its province in its present state.

In order to ascertain how the will is qualified to improve the objects thus represented to it by the understanding, we should consider, first, the nature of the will; which is that faculty of the mind that has good for its object, and which it is appointed, by the great and beneficent Author of our being, instinctively and invariably to seek. Secondly, the will, though an original faculty, is only the *medium* of power, or that faculty by which power operates. Thirdly, both the will, and the power by which it acts, depend on the principle or the *nature* of the agent in all moral determinations. Therefore, fourthly, the nature of every moral agent, from the most perfect to the most imperfect, is the *radical source* of all moral actions. From the nature proceed the power and the volition; and as the nature is, so will be the choice as good or evil, in all moral agents whatever. Thus from the nature of God proceeds the exercise of His power and will, and according to His nature are His volitions, "holy, just, and good;" and the same law is invariably applicable to all intelligent agents,—to Jesus Christ, to holy angels, to perfect Adam, to his imperfect descendants, and to all apostate beings.

Hence we see, first, the absurdity of regarding the WILL as a *self-determining power*, whether we consider it in reference to God, or to man formed after His image; for the nature of the agent invariably determines the will. Secondly, the choice is as the greatest *apparent* good; for the will can choose nothing but

as it is represented by the understanding; and this can view no object accurately, as God, or other objects as properly related to Him, while the nature of the agent is destitute of that spiritual light which he enjoyed in a state of integrity. Consequently, the apparent good chosen will never coincide with what is really good, but in proportion as the understanding of the agent is enlightened. Thirdly, to suppose that the will does not choose, in all cases, the greatest *apparent* good, involves this absurdity, that we choose in some cases what upon the whole we deem best not to choose; which is the same as to maintain that we choose evil, as evil, which is evidently incompatible with our mental constitution.

Man, therefore, in the present state, may be compared to one who employs the light of a taper for the purpose of seeking an eligible object. We may suppose him situated in a large room, (for such is the surrounding universe,) which is abundantly stored with objects, some valuable, and many unsuitable to his immediate real wants, and therefore to him worthless. Whatever his imperfect understanding perceives, of that he forms an estimate; and he cannot but give the preference to what appears to him, all things considered, preferable. Now, considering man thus circumstanced, his criminality consists in his adopting those objects of choice which, as he may know from his own consciousness, do not contain the chief good he needs, and which he is instinctively seeking. Having "forsaken the fountain of living waters," he is perpetually engaged in "hewing out to himself cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." He has recourse to one idol after another, little suspecting his radical mistake, that GOD is not in his thoughts or desires. He does not improve the objects and means with which he is conversant, in order to acquire and possess the chief good. That appears to him most eligible, in the act of choosing, which a mind morally upright views as not preferable; and that appears to him a thing to be chosen for its own sake, which ought to be chosen for a higher end.

Moreover; the will of man, in his present imperfect state, under the guidance of the understanding, while in quest of moral truth and happiness, resembles a traveller who aims at his wished-for home. Were it perfect day, he might discern a straight, plain path; but being overtaken by the night, introduced by sin, he has only a faint light, "shining in a dark place," to direct him. Besides,

he has wandered, and actually lost his path. His will, however, being set upon his home, some step must be taken. This is man's present state, and the truth of the representation any one might ascertain, if he were but impartially attentive to the operations of his own mind. Now the question is, since a deviation from rectitude and a forfeiture of spiritual life do not, and, indeed, cannot discharge him from obligation, What is his duty? I answer, it consists in his employing what light he has in order to discover the right path which leads to happiness in God, which is the chief end and the chief good of the soul; and his criminality consists in his growing indifferent about the path of safety, and indulging an idolatrous satisfaction with what he may be conscious is not the good and the happiness he needs. The will ought to abandon every false resting-place, and earnestly desire light from the "Father of lights," which may shine upon its path. Then only can the understanding be a safe guide to the will when it is illuminated from heaven; and without this illumination the glories of the Divine perfections will not appear, much less the mysteries of redeeming love and mercy. And, in reality, until the understanding be supernaturally enlightened, the genuine beauty and glory of the works of creation, preservation, and providence, are not discerned; because the relation they bear to God, His holiness and justice, His goodness and mercy, His wisdom and sovereignty, can be perceived only through the medium of a Divine irradiation: "In thy light shall we see light."

The sum of what has been advanced is this: God has given to the soul of man, as a firm and invariable principle, a tendency towards good and happiness in general; but the will never chooses what is not represented to it by the understanding. The will, however, is capable of renouncing a good represented, and a happiness enjoyed of an inferior kind, though a better does not actually and distinctly appear; because the soul may be conscious that what it possesses is not the chief good, is not its ultimate happiness,—conscious that it has not attained to its original destination, and that a greater good is attainable than any which it has yet experienced. Thus the soul's general tendency to ultimate good and happiness keeps it ever in expectation, through every stage of life, and in all its various pursuits. Its fault, therefore, or moral failure and criminality, consists in a temporary but idolatrous *resting* in what is not the chief good of man; and this idolatry is

committed not only when an inferior good is falsely deemed preferable to another, but also when any created good whatever is not chosen with reference to the chief, and in subordination to it. This statement is founded in fact, in universal and impartial experience, to which the appeal is now made.

According to equity, in a system of moral government, man's obligation to be perfectly conformable to a good law is not in proportion to *subjective light* in his understanding, but to *objective means* suited to his chief end. For if, through his own fault, he is destitute of a right perception of God and other things related to Him, his obligation to perceive aright cannot cease without involving the most absurd consequences. For, first, it would imply, that the more dark the mind is, though surrounded with the most excellent means of knowledge, the less is it accountable for its use or abuse of them; and, secondly, the notion is incompatible with the idea of a moral system, which necessarily implies a possibility of losing the light once enjoyed as a righteous forfeiture. The exhibition of means, therefore, with the preservation of our natural faculties and moral freedom, must, through every period of our existence, be the basis of obligation and accountability. And thus all men are without excuse, because "the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, even His eternal power and Godhead," are exhibited to their understandings; and, therefore, whether they clearly perceive and rightly understand what is thus exhibited or not, their obligation is the same. And in proportion as any have additional objective discoveries, they are additionally obliged to improve them in the same degree.

The scale of means according to which men are obliged, in a moral sense, admits of degrees innumerable, from conscious existence to the fullest and clearest testimonies of revelation. A mind suitably disposed and reasonably affected with merely the human frame, supposing every other object were sealed up in darkness, might devoutly say, "I am not my own maker, preserver, or proprietor, but the work and property of some wise, powerful, and benevolent Being; I will, therefore, devote myself perpetually to His disposal." Thus the most benighted of human kind is not destitute of means abundantly sufficient to establish his accountability. And if so, what excuse can they offer who live in the land of "open vision," to whom "the gospel of God, that bringeth salvation," is announced in the plainest manner, accompanied with

a full blaze of external evidence? How inconceivably great must be their obligations! Surely these blessings, high as heaven, and deep as our greatest wants, demand no small share of affectionate reception and grateful obedience.

But what is the real fact with respect to men's improvement of the means they have? Can it be shewn that there ever existed, since the first delinquency of Adam, any mere man of whom it may be said, that he was as perfect as he had means of being so? Among reflecting persons, there can be but one opinion upon the subject. Here, then, is an incontrovertible ground of personal culpableness and exposure to penal evil, its necessary effect. If God, therefore, should "mark iniquity," and give to every one his due, who could avoid the doom of "the wicked and unprofitable servant?" "All are gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Every mouth is stopped, and all the world is become guilty before God." In this state of delinquency and guilt, of darkness and uncertainty, "ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth," Divine revelation finds the children of men. It offers a brighter light and a surer clue than any they possess, and proposes a Divine Leader to conduct them into all necessary truth. But, alas! "men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," and this aggravates their condemnation. When left to themselves, all men "walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Christ is exhibited as the Life of men, but they "will not come to Him that they might have life;" He is proposed to them as "the Sun of righteousness," and "the Light of the world," but in their degeneracy they prefer walking in the shadow of death, and on the brink of perdition, deliberately refusing His proffered benefits. Hence the justice of their final ruin, and its aggravation in proportion to the advantages proposed.

Here it is natural to ask, Whence proceed these defects,—darkness, depravity, and confusion,—through successive ages? We may observe, in the first place, that the human mind, in all possible modes and stages of its existence, is related to, as inseparable from it, a *negative* principle of defectibility. Had it not been for this, Adam *never could* have sinned, either through inadvertence, temptation, or anything else. In the second place, as mankind do not

co-exist independently, but rise to existence in succession, we are bound to regard the whole human race as one great system, of which every succeeding part depends on the preceding, as much as any succeeding species of plants, for instance, depends on the first plant of that species. If the first parent of our race lost his felicitous integrity, prior to his having any descendants, by what possible expedient, except by a sovereign righteousness and gracious influence, can we conceive of his posterity as being afterwards possessed of it? Any other supposition is as unreasonable as that streams of water may rise higher than their source, according to the constituted laws of nature, or that we "may gather grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles." "Can a fig-tree bear olive-berries, or a vine figs?" then, indeed, may the offspring of depraved Adam be conceived to spring into existence conformably to the moral standard of their original nature, or possessed of holiness and happiness. "By one man sin entered into the world," the system of mankind, "and death by sin;" not only the dissolution of the body followed, (which in case of continued perfection would have been prevented,) but, what is far more important, "the spirit of life" departed from the soul. As a tree withers when the vital sap is gone, and the animal dies when the vital principle ceases to operate; so the spiritual life, or the well-being of an accountable creature, departs, when righteousness, holiness, and happiness in God, are lost.

The only objection, I conceive, that can be made to this statement, with any degree of plausibility, is the following:—If human souls be united to their bodies by immediate creation, and not according to the operations of providential laws in the propagation of other animal species, they must be as pure, that is, righteous and holy, as the soul of Adam; since it would be unworthy of God to create them otherwise. Now, setting aside all controversy respecting the truth or falsehood of the supposition, for argument's sake I shall admit the hypothesis; and observe, first, that it is impossible to conceive of any created substance unconnected with a "root of mutability;"* in other words, a *negative principle* of

* The celebrated F. Turretine observes:—"If God were not absolutely immutable, He would have in Himself *potentiam passivam, radicem mutabilitatis*," *passive power, the root of mutability.—Instit. Theol.*, loc. iii., q. v., § 7. See also q. vii., § 4; q. xi., § 4, &c. &c. The *idea* which is intended to be conveyed by these expressions, and which is essential to several parts of this essay, has excited some attention; and as the charge of novelty, as well as of impropriety, has been

defectibility. Secondly, allowing it to be unworthy of God to create a human soul otherwise than pure at the first moment of its existence, it does not follow that it must be so the next moment; for its *well*-being is not essential to its *being*, as universal fact proves. Thirdly, God is under no obligation, in equity, to preserve any creature in purity and the perfection of its nature; otherwise there could be no actual defection in the universe. Fourthly, the proper nature of sin, whether in actions or dispositions, is a *defect* of righteousness and holiness, which defect God alone, by the exercise of a sovereign prerogative, can counteract; for it is not conceivable that any creature has an equitable claim upon Him for the continuance of any *favour*, whether created with it, or added afterwards. Fifthly, the purity and perfect nature of a human soul, in every successive moment of its existence, is an undeserved favour, whereby the root of its mutability, its want of ulterior perfection, or its inseparable negative source of defectibility, is prevented from shewing itself. In a word, remove the absurd assumption, too long imagined, that original sin is something *positive*, rather than *negative*, and the whole difficulty vanishes. What is *essential* to the soul continues through every stage, its

advanced against the *term* PASSIVE POWER, it may not be amiss to take notice of it here. This is not the place, however, to discuss the charge of impropriety; I shall therefore attend to that of novelty only. "I do not remember," says Dr Reid, "to have met with the phrase *passive power* in any other good author. Mr Locke seems to have been unlucky in inventing it."—*Active Powers of Man*, Ess. 1, chap. iii. Surely either the Doctor's memory was uncommonly defective at the time he wrote this, or else his reading must have been very partial. Did he never read Gale's "Court of the Gentiles," C. Wolfius's "Philosophia Prima," or Brucker's "History of Philosophy?" If these are not "good authors" on the different subjects which employed their pens, his notions of good authorship must be of a very "novel" cast. Dr Enfield was not intimidated by Reid's unfounded remark:—"Power is either active or passive: active power is the principle of motion, or change, acting upon another substance; *passive power* subsists in the subject upon which active power is exercised. These are correlatives, and cannot be separated."—*History of Philosophy*, vol. i., p. 279. The present question is not whether Aristotle and the *best writers* of his school used the phrase with the strictest propriety, but whether, on their own principles, they were "good authors?" And how, moreover, could Dr Reid impute to Locke the *invention* of a phrase which had been of standing use in the schools of philosophy for above two thousand years? Locke very well knew that the Greek and Latin phrases used in the philosophic schools could not be translated into English more literally than by "passive power;" and this translation had been made long before ready to his hand. How, then, could HE be said "*to have been unlucky in inventing it?*"

natural faculties, and, on the part of God, its moral freedom; but what constitutes its continued, and its restored, moral purity, perfection, and happiness in vital union to God, is not its equitable due, but a superadded gracious gift. This rationally vindicates the whole scriptural account of original sin, in harmony with the equity and sovereignty of God.

Section III.

Of the Moral Rule according to which Man is governed.

We now proceed to consider the rule of *right* according to which the Supreme Ruler governs His human subjects, or that on which His own conduct is founded in reference to man. On this important subject there are two sentiments of radical consideration. The first is, that the *will* of God is the ultimate source of right; or that anything He commands is right merely because He wills it. In my apprehension, this is not an innocent mistake, but in its legitimate consequences a very dangerous error, though some persons of great learning and respectability have adopted it. It is allowed by all that a human legislator and judge, when he acts in character, wills a thing because it is *just*, or according to the truth of relations; and "shall not the Judge of all the earth do *right?*" When, indeed, the will of God and the will of man are put in competition, it would be absurd to dispute about the preference, because the Divine will is infallibly perfect. We are not to confound the *evidence* of truth, and the *source* of it. To us, it is admitted, it is a sufficient *evidence* that a thing is right because God wills it; and "thus saith the Lord" demands our faith and obedience; but the supposition of a supreme will without a rule of right according to which it is directed is equally false and dishonourable to God.

According to the sentiment I am now opposing, it might have been right in God to command, in addressing man, "Thou shalt *hate* the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy soul." If it be said that God is not capable of doing this, I ask, Why not capable? If His will has no rule of right, His doing so could not be wrong. And were His will a supreme rule to Himself, He might clear the guilty or condemn the innocent, as well as the contrary. On that principle, what harm or impropriety would there be in His breach of promise? Besides, this notion leads directly to the absurd consequence of the will being a self-determining power, or the operation of will without a previous ground of willing, which is the same as to assert an

effect without a cause. And those who claim this property for the human will, would do well to establish the previous question, Whether such a property belongs to the Divine will, which, as they contend, is the great exemplar after which the will of man is formed? This, I am satisfied, they can never effect; nor prove that there is a *self-determining will* in the possibility of things.

The second sentiment respecting the rule of right to which I before alluded, as of radical consideration on the subject, is the reverse of what we have been considering—viz., that God wills or commands a thing because it is right. If this were not the fact, what consistent meaning could there be in Abraham's approved language, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do *right?*" On the other supposition, there could be neither good nor evil, right nor wrong, in anything previous to His willing it. But, it will be asked, can there be anything superior to the will of God, to which that will may be conformable, and according to which it is directed? Undoubtedly there is, and with the same evidence of truth as that His nature is uncaused, and the rectitude of it independent of His will. The rule of right, therefore, according to which the will of God operates and governs, is the infinite and eternal rectitude of His nature. This is, demonstrably, the ultimate standard of right and truth, of goodness and wisdom, and according to which His power and will operate. And as He is a Being of infinite perfection, having no root of mutability, no negative principle of defectibility, self-existent, and independent, His will must be always *right.* Will, in accurate conception, as before observed, is a medium of power; and both power and will operate, invariably, according to the nature of the agent.

These things premised, we shall now inquire into the nature of that moral rule, or law, according to which man is governed by the Supreme Ruler. When we say, it is *the will of God,* we only give it a denomination; but our present inquiry relates to the *nature* of the thing so denominated. Nor is it sufficient, in this investigation, to say, that the law is a *rule of action given by a superior;* because, though a truth, it does not conduct our ideas beyond mere will, which, in strictness, is not the *standard* of right, but its *expression.* We say, then, that the *nature* of that rule or law which is the great standard of moral government over mankind is, the RELATION subsisting between the Divine Governor and man the governed. And there seems to be no other satisfac-

tory method of ascertaining this relation but by forming accurate conceptions of the true characters of the beings related. GOD is a being of all possible perfection; self-existent, independent, and all-sufficient; infinitely benevolent, wise, and powerful; so just, that He gives to every one his due to the full extent of his true claim; and so sovereign, that He never fails to secure His own ends, which are ever benevolent and wise. MAN is a being absolutely dependent on God for his existence, capacities, and operations; possessed of moral freedom, and capable of knowing and loving God. In a word, he is capable of religion, a property which belongs to no other creature in our world.

We observe, again, that God *exhibits* to mankind His adorable being and perfections by different modes, in a manner less or more explicit; and *bestows* upon them favours and benefits unnumbered. Man's corporeal exigences are provided for; means of comfort are pointed out in the various ways of providence; every faculty and affection has presented to it a corresponding good; so that nothing but his blindness and moral depravity prevents his enjoyment of all that happiness which he originally possessed, and of which he is still capable. This is the subsisting relation which constitutes that rule of moral government which may be called the *moral law,* which the Sacred Scriptures express in different forms, and frequently inculcate. Its requisitions are summarily comprehended in these two ideas—SUPREME *love* to GOD, and DISINTERESTED *love* to our fellow-MEN, our enemies not excepted. That part of God's revealed will which is commonly termed "the ten commandments," includes a most important and comprehensive summary of moral duties, (with which is incorporated something of a positive nature with corresponding sanctions,) adapted to peculiar circumstances; and which, as a whole, may be considered as the *formula* of the Mosaic establishment, or the grand *constitution* on which the Mosaic laws are founded.

Hence we see that the moral law is not, as vulgarly imagined, some separate thing which may be abstractly considered without any reference to the characters of God and of man; but its very existence, its extent and degree of obliging power, bear an exact proportion to these characters, in connexion with the *representations* which God makes of Himself to man and the *benefits* conferred upon him. In Himself, God is always the same, but men

have different capacities, moral means, and opportunities; "for as many as have sinned without law [*i.e.*, a revelation of the will of God] shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law [*i.e.*, under a revelation] shall be judged by the law." Relations are constituted by creation, providence, and grace. The discovery of new relations, arising from benefits exhibited or conferred, produces new obligations, according to the diversified circumstances of different subjects. "To whom much is given, of him much is required." "To some are given five talents, to others two, and to others one; to every man according to his several ability."

It is necessary to observe, that the obliging law results, not merely from what man is now, but also from what the human system was originally. If God's conduct towards our first father was equitable; if it was right that mankind should exist by succession, and that the son should be as the father; and if the transgression of a law does not diminish its authority to oblige,—it follows, that all Adam's posterity are bound to be as perfect as he was, according to the objective means afforded. All mankind have the stupendous monuments of creation and providence set before them, by which "the invisible things of God may be known," His being, power, wisdom, and goodness; and, were there no guilty defect in their disposition, they would continually devote themselves to Him without reserve. But, alas! "darkness hath covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Millions among whom "the true light now shineth," objectively, remain in the most deplorable ignorance of God and His revealed will. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not."

Before we close this head of discussion, it may be proper to add, that God has enacted, from time to time, *positive laws*, which, to the subjects on whom they are obligatory, have no *apparent reason* of injunction besides the mere authority of the Lawgiver. Yet this authority, being decisively manifested, introduces the subject into new circumstances of relation, and therefore he becomes morally obliged to observe them. In short, as the Divine authority never enjoins natural impossibilities, and as the manifestation of the supreme will, which is incapable of erring, is a sufficient reason why we should comply with its requisitions, there arises an

obligation even from moral considerations to obey all positive commands.*

* See the subject of positive laws and institutions, with the method of ascertaining what is *positive* and what is *moral* in the same command, in "Antipædobaptism Examined," vol. i., chap. i. *passim*, [vol. ii. of this Edition.]—See, also, further observations on the *will of God* as the *rule of moral government*, in a "Discourse on the Influence of Religious Practice on our Inquiries after Truth," pp. 13-20, 31, [vol. iii. of this Edition, pp. 296-300, 303.]

CHAPTER IV.

OF MORAL GOVERNMENT AS IT RELATES TO THE DIFFERENT DISPENSATIONS OF REVEALED RELIGION.

SECTION I.

Of Moral Government as it respects the Dispensations of Revealed Religion in general, and particularly from Adam to Moses.

No sooner had our progenitor, Adam, transgressed the positive command of the Supreme Governor, than the execution of the penal sanction followed. The command was, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Were we to indulge curiosity, many inquiries might be here instituted respecting this tree and its fruit, the species, its physical qualities, &c. &c. But this would lead us into the philosophy of *conjecture*, (of which there is enough in the present day,) and to vain and unprofitable speculations. We may rest assured, that the command was founded in wisdom, that it was highly suitable to the circumstances of the moral subjects, and that the sanction was not inequitable. As penal evil is the *necessary* effect of transgression, the *threatening* was a declaration of that effect. A spiritual death, therefore, must have seized the soul immediately; or, what may be denominated, most emphatically, the *life*, the well-being, of a perfect creature, forsook it. And though the death of the body did not immediately follow, obnoxiousness to it was incurred, and the sentence of the Judge was pronounced accordingly. "And unto Adam he said, ... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." As if He had said, Thou art no longer to expect my sovereign interposition

to prevent that mortality to which, by the common laws of the universe, thy frame tends. Thus, "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passeth upon all."

Observing that among men there awaits every conditional engagement a permanent consequence on either side, some have been led to inquire, What would have been the consequence of Adam's continued obedience? To this inquiry different answers have been given, not one of which, I conceive, needs to be noticed, because the question overlooks the nature of the subject. For it might as well be asked, What would have been another plan of creation and providence, if the present had not been adopted? And this again would lead us to the fruitless inquiry, In how many different ways was it possible for God to form a universe? Everything in the plan actually adopted proceeds on the supposition of Adam's apostasy; therefore to suppose his constant obedience, is not only to suppose an alteration in a *single part* of the Divine scheme, but to substitute *another system.* Though we discard the unfounded notion of Adam's apostasy being decreed, and the self-contradictory notion of a Divine "decree to permit" it; it was foreseen in its adequate cause, and the Divine plan proceeds on that foreknowledge.

Nearly allied to the preceding question is, What must have been the consequence respecting *fallen* Adam's posterity in this world, on supposition that no Saviour had been provided? This, as well as the former inquiry, overlooks the nature of the subject; and takes for granted that the consequence might have taken place, without supposing another world. Whereas the truth is, that since the present plan of things, in all its parts, proceeds on the supposition of a Saviour provided, to suppose this removed is to suppose *another universe.* On the whole, relative to all such questions, we may remark, if there were no "*second* Adam, the Lord from heaven," how can it be shewn to have been worthy of either the goodness or wisdom of God to appoint a *first* Adam, who He foresaw would fall as the *representative* of his posterity? Nor can it be shewn to be consistent with a full display of His rectoral *equity* and sovereign *mercy,* that He should so have interposed as to secure Adam's *continuance* in the state in which he was first placed. As far, therefore, as the providence and government of God are concerned in the present state of things, we may safely assert, "Whatever IS, is RIGHT."

Seeing, then, that only on the *present plan* does there appear that any room could be left for an admixture and wise display of Divine equity and mercy, we may easily perceive how well adapted it is, above every other *supposed* plan, for the full exercise of moral government. But that we may the more profitably contemplate this admixture and display in the various and wonderful steps of the Divine government over mankind, through the different periods of time, in the different dispensations of revealed religion, it will be proper to make two remarks. First, every exercise of Divine equity towards mankind, on the present plan, presupposes a display of grace for its basis. Even in the pristine state of perfect rectitude, the exercise of equity presupposed not only the favour of existence, but also the grace of preservation to the moment of actual defect. And still more obviously its exercise towards men as imperfect presupposes Divine forbearance, and overtures of mercy, with different degrees of plainness, according to the dispensations under which they live. No person, on the present plan, will be condemned for mere breach of law unconnected with forbearing mercy, and with intimations more or less explicit of a sovereign Benefactor as well as an equitable Governor. Hence the awful glories of a future final judgment!

Secondly, On the present plan of moral government, there is no situation in life, nor any degree of advancement in the Divine favour, which excludes the exercise of holy fear and of studious diligence in the way of duty. For the best of men, and the most highly favoured, if they look to strict equity, or to what they may claim as their just due from the Supreme Governor, have cause to dread the consequence; because every moment they are endangered when they "lean to their own understanding," or trust their own hearts. Their whole safety consists in the favour of God, communion with Him according to His own appointment, and humble dependence upon His constant aids. In brief, while there is the exercise of equity in God, there is just cause for man to fear; and while there is with him the exercise of sovereign grace, there is a foundation for hope. While the day of grace, or the dispensation of mercy, continues, to despair is rebellious ingratitude; and while God is an equitable Governor, to discard holy fear and humble diffidence is dangerous presumption. Hence the propriety of addressing the chief of saints in such language as this, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall;" and of

exhibiting to the trembling sinner an encouraging ground of pardon and salvation. Thus the displays of equity and mercy with God, compared with the impotency and present degeneracy of man, are wonderfully adapted to answer the ends of moral government.

We now proceed to inquire in what manner the Divine Governor conducted Himself towards mankind after the fall of Adam. After this event, no human being had any claim upon God, either to restore that spiritual life of holiness and happiness which was now lost, and which is the well-being of the immortal soul, or to suspend the consequence of immediate and permanent suffering which was deserved by wilful disobedience. Nevertheless, God was pleased in sovereign mercy to announce to our apostate first parents the MEANS of salvation through a Mediator, though in an indirect way. Their deep sense of guilt and shame rendered this promissory intimation peculiarly seasonable :—"And the Lord God said unto the serpent, ... I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." As if He had said, Though I send forth the man from the garden of Eden, for his transgression, to till the ground from whence he was taken, I will not leave him without hope of recovered happiness, notwithstanding thy Satanic design. The woman shall have a descendant, who shall prove a mighty Deliverer from sin and misery, though He accomplish it in the way of suffering. The glorious truth, the mediatorial nature, and the vast importance of this promise, must have been daily corroborated by the institution of worship and sacrifice, by the expressed approbation of services, by the experienced pleasures of devotion and religious obedience, and by occasional visible or audible manifestations of the Divine presence and glory.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, not only "walked with God" in faith and hope, humility and love, crediting His promise and obeying His commands, but was an eminent *prophet* in his day. He was instructed to foretell clearly the final judgment, with the different destinies of saints and sinners. "Behold," said he, "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." To the great mass of mankind at that period, this was a

seasonable warning, declaring that the Supreme Governor was awfully just, as well as merciful. After this highly-favoured subject had lived a holy life, and had faithfully exhorted his contemporaries on the most important subjects, for about three hundred years, he was taken to glory in a miraculous manner; which fact was a standing monument of *mercy* to that and every succeeding age. For it should be observed, whatever recorded displays of grace and mercy were made to these patriarchs, they were intended for universal benefit.

Of Noah it is expressly said that "he found GRACE in the eyes of the Lord." God shewed him *favour* above all the other inhabitants of the world, by which he became "a preacher of righteousness." He was a happy exception from the darkness and depravity of the age in which he lived, and of the awful doom that followed:—"And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." After justice had cleared the earth of its rebellious inhabitants by the deluge, God's manifestation of peculiar favour to Noah and his family becomes, in effect, the origin of a new dispensation. And, as the institution of sacrifices was a sign and seal of the former dispensation of mercy, so now, the covenant being renewed, an additional seal is appended:—"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I *establish* my covenant with you, and with your seed after you. . . . . And God said, This is the token of the covenant: I do set my bow in the cloud." I have had occasion elsewhere to remark on this passage, "that the covenant or divine charter given to Noah *included* the preceding; it was the *same covenant* with additional grants. Lest Noah should infer that the drowning of the world in wrath disannulled the well-known covenant, God dissipates his fears, by saying, I will *establish* my covenant." * No former exhibition of mercy, or any preceptive appointment, was repealed, but each was confirmed and augmented.

When we come to the time of Abraham, the language of GRACE becomes more decisive, conspicuous, and rich:—"I will make of thee," says God, "a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, [*i.e.* my *favour* shall attend those who approve of thy religion, and my

* Antipædobaptism Examined, vol. i., p. 238, [vol. ii. of this Edition, p. 141.]

justice shall oppose those who reject it:] and in thee shall all families [or tribes] of the earth be blessed. . . . . After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. . . . . And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. I will *establish* my covenant with thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an *everlasting covenant*, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations." On the discoveries thus made to Abraham, St Paul's observation is very remarkable:—"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the *gospel* unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed;" implying, that salvation was by *grace* to him as well as to the Gentiles.

The apostle's illustration of the Abrahamic dispensation of grace, and the strain of his reasoning upon it, deserve our careful attention; but because what he advances on the subject is of considerable length, I refer to the passages at the bottom of the page.* On this dispensation itself, however, aided by St Paul's comment, I shall offer a few observations. First, What in the original grant is called a *covenant*, is by the apostle termed a *promise*:—"If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise." It was not properly a *contract*, but a *grant* of privileges to the unworthy. Its existence did not depend on Abraham's acceptance of terms, any more than that of the gospel depends on our manner of hearing it. No *law* was adequate to effect the recovery of fallen sinners; for "if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." The apostle elsewhere observes, that the law is become "weak through the flesh,"—that is, the impotence of the law to make us righteous arises from *our defect*. Grant it a subject free from defect, (as Jesus Christ was,) and it is no longer weak. To enjoin good precepts, to multiply their number, to shew their excellency and reasonableness, and to enforce them with the most awful and tremendous threatenings in case of disobedience,—all such acts are utterly unable of themselves to effect our salvation, on account of our moral impotency.

* Gal. iii. 6–22; Rom. iv. 9–25; Heb. vi. 13–18.

Therefore, "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, [*i.e.*, a sin-offering,] condemned sin in the flesh." Hence "the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the *promise* by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that *believe*."

Secondly, As every rational being is accountable for the use he makes of promises, as well as of all other moral means, God reminds Abraham of what was *required* of him in return:—"Walk before me, and be thou perfect." As if He had said, If I have revealed to thee my designs of mercy, which are also to be extended to all nations in future ages,—if I exhibit to thee a ground of pardon and acceptance, see that thou receive it for thy safety and comfort, and improve it for the purpose of universal obedience. And thus the prophet Micah, many ages after:—"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is *good;* and what doth the Lord *require* of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" As the foundation of acceptable obedience, God "shews man what is good,"—that mercy, pardon, righteousness, and felicity which he needs,—and then points out his equitable demands: justice, mercy, and a humble dependence upon God. When he says to Abraham, "Be thou perfect," he intends that his conduct before or with God should be upright, sincere, or without any allowed sin.

Thirdly, This covenant, or promise, in its external exhibition, belonged not only to Abraham, but also to his descendants; and not only to these, but also to the Gentiles, as a ground of faith:—"In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." "That he might be the father of all them that believe." The appointed mode of receiving the blessings exhibited in the promise is by believing:—"They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." A mere *law*, instead of affording relief to its transgressors, can only condemn them as guilty, and bind them over to suffering; but "the *gift* of God is eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ." The great business of a believer, the righteous man, is "to live by faith," which was never designed to preclude obedience; nor can that faith be genuine which is not operative. "Faith, if it hath not works, is

dead, being alone." "Was not Abraham our father justified [*i.e.*, *declared* to be righteous and obedient] by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." The gift of righteousness is no less conducive to holy obedience than it is to happiness. Faith, as a principle, is the spiritual life of the soul, and holy obedience its health; the former is the prolific root, the latter the fruit; the one is the foundation of personal religion, the other the corresponding superstructure.

Fourthly, The substance, the end, and the glory of this promise is Jesus Christ:—"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God." Were it not for Christ, "the seed of the woman," and who is emphatically "the seed of Abraham," we should never have heard of any other seed being favoured with Divine, federal privileges. All others are noticed and blessed *for His sake* who is the end of the promises, and of the law and the prophets; for, as all the patriarchal promises referred to Him as their completion, so all the sacrifices and ceremonial observances were only "a shadow of things to come; but the body [that is, the substance] is of Christ." In short, promises without Christ would be as insignificant and unprolific as planetary orbs without their central sun.

Fifthly, The promise made to Abraham is of an immutable nature, so that no precept, either moral or positive, can disannul it:—"And this I say, that the covenant, [or, the Abrahamic promise,] that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect." "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath." The subject of the oath is the immutability of the Divine counsel in giving the promise, or in making an overture of righteousness and acceptance to the objects addressed. The primary proposal is to sinners, whether Jews or Gentiles; and whether they believingly receive and improve it or not, He continues immutable in his gracious offer. "If we believe not, He abideth faithful." No unbelief on the sinner's part can "make the faith [*i.e.*, the immutable *faithfulness*]

of God of no effect." What a glorious display does this afford of the Divine government!

Finally, To all believers God's promise affords the strongest ground of consolation conceivable:—"That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Knowing our infirmities, and that unbelief is a "sin that easily besets us," Jehovah, in addition to His promise, "swears by Himself;" and thus, as it were, pledges His own blessed Being for the truth and stability of what He says. How well adapted is this wonderfully glorious conduct of the Promiser to put an end to all unbelieving, ungrateful, and disobedient strife in our minds! He proposes, in the promise to a ruined sinner, accompanied with the highest possible assurance, His readiness to bless him, on terms inexpressibly advantageous; to bestow upon him pardon and peace, righteousness and life, Christ and Himself, grace and glory. What equity and mercy reign here! "He that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Section II.

Of Moral Government as it respects the Mosaic and Christian Dispensations.

Without disannulling the former promises, God gave by Moses to the Hebrews a number of laws, both moral and positive, digested into one body, which may be called the Mosaic covenant. After a solemn preparation,* its *formula*, or the comprehensive *constitution* of the Theocracy, is rehearsed by Jehovah himself, in ten sections, commonly called the ten commands.† To this was annexed a large assemblage of positive laws and ceremonial rites, occasionally intermixed with merciful grants, conditional promises, moral precepts, and awful sanctions. Much light is cast on this federal dispensation by the prophet Jeremiah‡ and the apostle Paul;§ and from what they say, in connexion with the Mosaic account, we may form a pretty accurate notion of its nature and design.

I. It was an act of sovereign *favour* in God to take the people into covenant at all:—"Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." It is obvious on the face of their history, that there was no antecedent excellence in this people, as God himself often reminded them, to deserve a selection from among other people for the participation of such privileges; nor does there appear in former promises any ground of obligation on the part of God, that He should enter into this covenant with Israel; it remains, therefore, that it was done in pursuance of His mere sovereign grace and infinitely wise purpose.

II. This transaction, however, had in it more of the nature of a *strict covenant*, than what had been so termed in any preceding period between God and men. It was, perhaps, more so than

* Exod. xix. 3–9.
† Exod. xx. 3–17.
‡ Jer. xxxi. 31–34.
§ Heb. viii. 6–13, ix. 1, 2.

any event recorded in Scripture; for all the subsequent federal solemnities were either ratifications of this, or merely subservient and explanatory. "These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord." Here we see a gracious *proposal* on the part of the Supreme Governor; the people's public and explicit *acceptance* of the terms proposed; and an *avowal* of that acceptance,—which are the essential parts of a strictly federal transaction. Nor can anything be imagined, except the concluding scene of human probation, more tremendously awful than the ushering in of this covenant:—"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." What an awful emblem of the *justice* of the Supreme Governor!

III. This covenant contains, by implication, a rich exhibition of sovereign *grace*:—"I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." When the people saw, heard, and felt the tremendous tokens of Divine majesty and justice, they said unto Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die;" then he said, "Fear not." What could be more graciously encouraging than this concise reply added to the introductory declaration, "I am the Lord thy God!" And what could be better calculated, in connexion with the whole solemnity, to impress them with a proper sense of the Divine majesty and justice, and to deter them from disobedience, than the concluding expressions, "God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not."

IV. Majestic and venerable as this covenant was, it was not intended to continue always; but after a limited period it was to

give place to a new and permanent covenant. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. . . . . In that he saith, A NEW covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." It was not, however, to be removed with sudden violence, but by suitable degrees, with dignity and ease, and by the same Divine hand that formed it; just as the light of the moon and stars gradually vanishes at the approach of the rising sun. Though a large proportion of this covenant included things of a positive and therefore variable nature, yet other parts of it were of moral and perpetual obligation. When the Mosaic structure was taken down, the Christian temple was erected. The former building, as a whole, was demolished, but the materials, which were in their own nature durable or incapable of decay, were adopted for a new fabric. For example, did the Mosaic code contain the requisition of loving God and man? This was not left to perish with "beggarly elements," or to vanish with typical shadows; but was transferred to the new erection, "the house of the living God," which is never to be exchanged for another temporal edifice. Thus a code of laws, belonging to a former dynasty, including the constitution itself, may, as a whole, be repealed or disannulled; and yet many parts of the ancient code may be adopted under the new dynasty, associated with other laws and sanctions, and placed in different relations.

V. Hence the Mosaic dispensation was evidently of a *preparatory* nature. On this idea is founded St Paul's remark:—"Before faith came, we were kept *under the law*, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore *the law was our schoolmaster* to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."* By "the law" here he means, indisputably, the system of Moses *as a whole;* and it is of importance to observe, that in the apostolic writings where "the law" is mentioned, the "ten commands" exclusively are seldom intended, but most commonly the Mosaic law, as a covenant, of which the decalogue was

* Gal. iii. 23-26.

the constitutional basis. And the judicious inquirer will find that this is always its import when any reference is made to its removal or abolition. It is, indeed, impossible in the nature of things that the moral law, as before explained, should be disannulled with respect to man in any state of his existence; therefore, when the Scripture asserts that "after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster," that is, the *law*, it follows irrefragably, that we are not to understand by it the *moral* law, as the standard of rectitude and obligation.

According to Jeremiah and St Paul, the GOSPEL is called a *covenant*, as well as the preceding dispensations:—"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts."* "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant. . . . . In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old."† Though the gospel, strictly so called, is more properly a *testament* than a *covenant*, yet seeing this testamentary grant must necessarily imply our obligation of acceptance and corresponding duties,—many of which duties are frequently specified, and sometimes enjoined on pain of God's highest displeasure,—there is also a propriety in calling the whole of the New Testament "a covenant." Here we may behold *mercy* and *justice* in their brightest glories. The distinguishing character of the *gospel* covenant, compared with all former dispensations, may be thus represented:—

First, The gospel, as to its *nature*, is the same with all the preceding exhibitions of *mercy* to sinful men, and differs only in the amplitude and clearness with which it is revealed. It contains the promises in maturity; points out, and identifies their foundation, the Messiah, by numberless adamantine proofs; and shews their ultimate tendency in the brightness of meridian day. The promise to our first parents was the green blade, but the gospel, as revealed in the New Testament, is the full corn in the ear; the former was the morning star, the latter is the rising sun. In its peculiar nature, it is essentially different from any *law* whatever; yet, as these "glad tidings" are made to men as free and accountable, it is manifest that none can reject them and be innocent. This is beautifully illustrated by the parable of the great supper.‡ The

* Jer. xxxi. 33. † Heb. viii. 6, 13. ‡ Luke xiv. 16–24.

gospel contains a proposal to guilty, ruined, helpless man, of every desirable good—reconciliation, pardon, and eternal life: hence arise *obligations* on those who live in this open day, more clear, more extensive, and more forcible than all others. Well may we exclaim, "Blessed is the people who *know* the joyful sound!" Happy are they who *build* upon this rock!

Secondly, The Christian covenant is pre-eminently distinguished from all preceding ones, and especially from the Mosaic, by the clearness of *everlasting* sanctions, to the exclusion of temporal penalties. The former dispensations abound with temporal promises—a numerous offspring, external peace and plenty, and the like—to the obedient; while the latter directs almost the whole of our expectations to a *future* state, a kingdom of celestial glory. The Mosaic code threatens the refractory with all that is terrible to human feelings in this life,—pestilence and famine, captivity and servitude, wars and devastations, to which we may add the punishments annexed to the violation of certain positive precepts, —but the New Testament refers the unbelieving and disobedient to the sufferings of another life, "where the fire is never quenched," and "where their worm never dieth;" where the unprofitable servant is confined to "outer darkness," and where all who obey not its calls and mandates are "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power." In this very striking difference there appears profound wisdom; for one grand design of the theocracy of the Jews was to keep them together as a *distinct people* until the coming of the Messiah. Hence a selected country, positive laws, temporal sanctions, inspired prophets, &c., all combining to preserve them as a connected body; but when the Messiah came, the "middle wall of partition" was taken down. A separate government, and consequently temporal sanctions, as well as typical shadows, were of no further use.

Thirdly, The Christian covenant differs from the legal, in that it has not only an incomparably superior Mediator, but also a *Surety*. Moses was faithful as a servant in God's household, but Jesus as a Son, whose house the Church is,—of His forming, and His peculiar property. Moses was also a mediator in an inferior sense, but not a surety; whereas Jesus is not only "the (*Μεσίτης*) *Mediator* of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises," but also "the (*ἔγγυος*) *surety* of a better testament." The mediation of Moses was only typical and ceremonial, but that

of Jesus Christ is real and efficacious with respect to spiritual life and salvation, and all our concerns with God as our Moral Governor. Not only would Moses have acted a most presumptuous part if he had undertaken to be the *surety* of the Israelites, as to their moral obedience and spiritual welfare; but, being their equal, he was naturally incapable of the office, and therefore could not have pretended to exercise it without the greatest absurdity. This office, the highest in the universe, could be exercised only by Him who can engage that all for whom He undertakes shall be made *willing* to receive the covenant in its full import, and be *obedient* unto the close of their probationary state; who can "*quicken* whom He will," and be to them a perpetual source of life and happiness; who can say with truth, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands."

Fourthly, The Christian covenant is, in a peculiar manner, "the ministration of the Spirit," and therefore far more glorious than any which preceded it:—"If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious?"* Not only the subjects of the Holy Spirit's influence are more numerous, but the degree of that influence is more abundant in the Christian Church, than in any former period:—"After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; . . . . and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me." Here it is implied, that the means of knowledge should be more general, and that Divine influence should be more copiously imparted under this dispensation, so as effectually to change the "hearts" or natures of men. Again:—"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."†

All holy characters, from the beginning of the world, have been partakers of the purifying operations of the Holy Spirit; but under the Christian economy this privilege is incomparably more frequent among men, whereby every Divine law resides "in their

* 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, &c. † Acts ii. 16, 17.

inward parts," as if written "in their hearts," maintaining an authoritative and lovely influence. Without this transforming influence, indeed, under whatever external dispensation, every person may be termed "a natural man," and his mind a "carnal" mind, which is not subject to the holy law of God; but when a man is "renewed in the spirit of his mind," he begins to *delight* in the rectitude, purity, and perfection of the law. He sincerely and habitually *loves* what he does not expect perfectly to *equal*, while in the present state, by a commensurate conformity. In short, when we consider the united testimonies of the prophets, of John the Baptist, of our Lord himself, and of His apostles, we have great reason to conclude, that God's gracious power is exerted upon a greater number of individuals, and to a greater degree, in the Christian Church, than under any former dispensation of grace; and this is verified by facts in those Christian communities which are not under the darkening and benumbing influence of antiscriptural principles.

From this detail, I hope it appears to the reader, that in each Divine dispensation *sovereign mercy* lays the foundation, *equity* presides to deter from unhallowed abuses, and efficacious grace raises the holy superstructure; and when the top-stone, the last of the building, is placed upon it, there will be abundant cause for a triumphant shout of "Grace, grace unto it"—the beginning, the progress, and the end of this "habitation of God" was of GRACE in a manner wonderfully consistent with *equitable government.*

CHAPTER V.

OF MORAL GOVERNMENT AS IT RELATES TO THE ASPECT, DESIGN, AND CLAIMS OF THE GOSPEL; AND TO THE RULE, OBJECTS, PROCESS, AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT.

SECTION I.

Of Moral Government as it relates to the Aspect and Design of the Gospel.

HAVING considered the Divine government in reference to the various dispensations of revealed religion, we now proceed to make some remarks on the *aspect*, *design*, and *claims* of revelation, but with a special regard to the gospel. With respect to the first of these ideas, we should carefully distinguish between the *actual* boundaries of revealed truth, as existing among men, and the gracious ASPECT of it according to the plan of moral government; since the latter may be of an extent widely different from the former. The actual privilege, in all ages, has been very partial; while its aspect, at least as to the most important part, the promise of mercy, was by no means confined. And this is analogous to the plan of providence, in which many things may be considered as universal blessings, while the actual participation is more limited.

The Divine revelations made to Adam, Enoch, and Noah, had undoubtedly a universality of aspect, because there was no expressed restriction of their promulgation to one person or people more than another; though the actual knowledge of the discovery was very confined. The first promise, for instance, was intended for the use of Cain as well as Abel, of the daughters of men as well as the sons of God, of Ham and Japheth as well as Shem. But it is easy to conceive how, through carelessness, worldly pursuits, and sensual gratifications, many persons, families, and tribes,

would lose the sacred deposit, though intended for their benefit. It may not, at first, be so easy to apprehend how the revelations made to Abraham and Moses had an aspect so universal. But this difficulty will vanish if we rightly consider the difference between the *instruments* by whom a revelation was to be communicated to others, and the *objects* for whom it was intended without restriction. Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Jacob, and their descendants to the time of Christ, were eminent instruments for this grand purpose; but it is evident, from the encouragement that was given to proselytes, that the patriarchs and their posterity were not the exclusive objects. Had any one of the human race stepped forward, and put in a claim of admission on the divinely-appointed terms, the Jews had no right to dispute that claim; which demonstrates, that even the revelation which of all others is deemed the most restrictive absolutely excluded no man.

There are important considerations by which we may account for the want of universality in the actual diffusion of revealed truth among men from the time of Abraham to Messiah's advent. One of these, and the most fundamental, is the moral depravity of mankind, whereby traditional knowledge was not suitably improved for further inquiries among that people to whom God had revealed Himself. They "loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." The traditional history of the creation and the deluge, and the revelation given to Noah, would have excited them to seek further information from the descendants of Shem and Abraham, had they not been idolatrously content with what they knew, and sensual in their affections and pursuits. The facts of a miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt under the conduct of Moses, and of the subsistence of the same people in the wilderness for a long period, could not be unknown to surrounding nations, but through culpable neglect. They were too much attached to their soil and its produce, their flocks and herds, hunting and warlike exploits, to pay attention to any such reports.

The necessarily insulated form of a theocracy, as a preparatory institution, is another important consideration, which ought to be taken into the account. To an impartial mind it must appear a truly amiable trait of moral government, that early predictions of a Saviour were given for the ground of faith and hope; and the more particular these predictions were, the more valuable they must have been. But how could their truth in identifying the

person intended be ascertained so completely, for the conviction of future generations throughout the world, except the Israelites had been preserved as a distinct people? And how admirable was the wisdom of those laws and regulations which effected this, in consistency with human freedom, notwithstanding the ignorance, the levity, the fickleness, and the folly of the human heart! Hence also the prohibitions of intermarriages with strangers, all the positive rites, the temporal promises and penal sanctions of the theocratical government. By not mixing with other nations (against which there were severe penalties) their genealogies were kept exact, whereby the predictions concerning the Messiah—as one who should spring from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, from the tribe of Judah, and the family of David, and who should be born at Bethlehem—might be easily traced. This distinct relation and specific character of prophecies respecting the Saviour, His lineage, the place of His nativity, the time of His appearing, and the reception that would be given to Him, must constitute a glorious part of the *evidences* of Christianity, and must appear to unprejudiced minds, in every succeeding age, as a plan worthy of an infinitely wise Moral Governor.

That the GOSPEL presents a universal aspect to all nations is plain to the most common observer. Though John the Baptist confined his ministrations to the Jews, being commissioned to call them, as the subjects of the Mosaic dispensation,—and to whom, as included in Abraham, primarily and most directly the promises were made,—to the exercise of repentance and a thankful reception of the Messiah; and though Christ himself, for similar reasons, went only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" yet, when He had finished His work of humiliation, and "brought in an everlasting righteousness," He uttered different language from what He had done before. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach [or, disciple] *all nations*;" or, as St Mark expresses it, "Go ye into *all the world, and* preach the gospel to *every creature*." For a time, Peter hesitated with respect to the universality of this commission; but he was at length convinced that the gospel looked upon *every* man. "God hath shewed me that I should not call *any* man common or unclean."* Accordingly, the apostles and disciples went forth in all directions, making no

* See Acts x. throughout.

difference between Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, bond and free, "preaching peace by Jesus Christ as Lord of all." They began, indeed, at Jerusalem, and commenced their labours in the synagogues wherever they went, because among the Jews were "the oracles of God," to them were given the promises, and from them, "according to the flesh," Christ came; hence, for a time, this order was observed—"to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

It is, however, a painful fact, that many nations are unacquainted with the gospel. But this is not to be imputed to any Divine *restriction* or *prohibition* given to men; but to their criminal neglect, in not acting according to the letter and spirit of the commission. Nor can any one who has opportunity of knowing that commission, and has it in his power to propagate the gospel, remain innocent, in not promoting its more extensive spread. As for those who *hinder* its diffusion, they act in hostile defiance of the Supreme Governor, they trample on the authority of the Prince of life; to stand before His tribunal, and to receive His judicial sentence, let them prepare:—"Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

From this discussion it is natural to infer, that to be *unconcerned* about the propagation of the gospel among the heathen, the Mohammedans, the Jews, and ignorant people of every name, is a crime of no small magnitude, and yet too common among those who call themselves Christians. How can such persons pray "Thy kingdom come," without condemning themselves by the very petition they utter? The evidence of the truth of Christianity having been sufficiently established, God does not employ miracles for its propagation, but leaves it with the subjects of His government as a sacred deposit which they are to use, and to circulate for the benefit of others. According to His plan of moral government, it is subjected to the same issue with other providential events, still under the control of sovereign prerogative in raising up instruments and preparing their way. And this is an argument why we should, with holy promptitude, improve every favourable opportunity that presents itself to encourage all suitable characters, to send them forth with ardent supplications, that they may diffuse

"the sweet savour of Christ" and the salutary streams of His gospel; and to charge them, that they communicate to others the pure doctrines and precepts of Christianity, and exemplify them in their own tempers and practice. Ought not opulent merchants, statesmen, and sovereigns, to take this into account? The poor "sheep in the wilderness" perish for want of pasture and of shepherds, while, alas! countless millions of money are expended in destroying men's lives, or are lavished on pleasures and follies, which in the end involve their votaries in disquietude, remorse, and perdition. May British influence continue no longer so criminally dormant in reference to this momentous object! And when at any time missionaries are employed for this benevolent purpose, may they be men of God, whose hearts and lives are transcripts of the gospel of peace!

This leads us to consider the DESIGN of God, as a Moral Governor, in giving mankind a revelation of His will; or, in other words, His *rectoral intention.* Respecting this important subject, there is no small difficulty in choosing *terms* which are not liable to be taken in a different sense from what is really meant. *Design,* intention, or purpose *in God,* strictly speaking, is one and undivided; yet it must be viewed as *related* to different objects; hence we employ a plural form of expression, as designs, intentions, purposes, or decrees. The epithet "rectoral," in this connexion, signifies that which relates to moral government; and the present inquiry is, What is the Supreme Governor's *rectoral design* in revealing His will to men, and especially the gospel, as consisting of declarations, testimonies, promises, precepts, and sanctions? The general answer is, to afford appropriate MEANS both of accountability and of salvation to all persons addressed.

First, To afford appropriate means of *accountability* in reference to all addressed without distinction. For the gospel, which I shall now consider as including all revealed truth, is in itself the same, however diversified the characters of men to whom it comes. And men's accountability, it is evident, arises from the *means* objectively afforded them, and not from their own inclinations or dispositions, whether good or bad. The declaration is, "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," without respect of persons.

Secondly, The rectoral design is to afford appropriate means of *salvation* to the persons addressed. Salvation is proposed in the

gospel on certain equitable terms to all who hear it. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Without a testimony there can be no believing; and without the seed of the kingdom there can be no fruit. The fountain from whence the testimony flows is Divine, sovereign mercy; and the design of giving it is not only to render all *accountable* for the use or abuse of it, but also to afford the means whereby *salvation* will be actually obtained by those who have "good and honest hearts." Hence we conclude, that the rectoral design affords to *all alike,* by the outward call of the gospel, an *opportunity,* or a suitable, merciful, and equitable inducement, of *believing,* and of complying with the invitation; and those who are the subjects of gracious influence will actually embrace the testimony for their salvation. Those who neglect this great salvation shall not escape; and those who cordially receive it have a "pearl of great price,"—"the good part that shall never be taken away from them." In them it remains as the "incorruptible seed of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." To them it becomes the means of faith unfeigned, evangelical repentance, saving knowledge, and holy obedience.

As this subject has an immediate relation to a judicious and faithful exercise of the Christian ministry, it is of great importance to have accurate and consistent views of its radical principles. Many have supposed, and have acted in their ministerial addresses on the supposition, that because the design, or decree of God, in *itself* considered, is but one, it has therefore only *one object*—the salvation of those whom He predestinated to life. But this is not a fair inference, because that purpose which is radically one in God may have many ramifications as related to divers objects. This fountain may have many streams which terminate in time, (as all successive moments and transitory events do,) besides that one great river which runs into the ocean of eternity. A due consideration of different objects and ends will explain this. Suppose, for example, the purpose of God in creating intelligent beings to be the subject of contemplation; this purpose assumes different aspects, and answers different ends, as it stands related to a variety of objects. If we regard GOD as the object, it ends in His own eternal glory, and therefore we may say, that His design therein was to *glorify* Himself. But if we regard those intelligent beings who shall be finally happy as the objects, we may say, that their

happiness was His design; and yet not the *whole* of His design, because it extends beyond them to His own glory.

Again, and which is the chief difficulty; suppose those intelligent beings who will not be happy to be the objects. It must be allowed that their existence and preservation, in themselves considered, are undeserved favours; and who can question that all the ordinate means of their happiness are of the same class? Being such, therefore, God must have purposed them. Nevertheless, beyond this point the stream of *distinguishing* mercy does not run; for His rectoral design, which is exercised in goodness, forbearance and long-suffering, is opposed by their impenitence. And now, the same Divine intention, itself unchanged, finds them standing in a different relation, fixing themselves in depravity, opposition, and rebellion, the cause of which is not in God, in any sense whatever. He neither created nor imparted it, and therefore it was no object of His purpose; and, indeed, being a negative principle, it is absolutely incapable of being purposed. Hence, that rectoral design which would have rendered them happy if penitent and submissive, becomes the innocent occasion of their misery. As the cause of transgression is not in the law, but merely the occasion of it; so the cause of men's misery is not from the Divine purpose, but in themselves opposing it. The God of goodness, "whose mercy endureth for ever," is the happiness of the righteous, but "a consuming fire" to the wicked. The change is not in Him, "with whom there is no variableness," nor in His good purpose, but in the rebellious object. God's decree is unchangeable as Himself, but the opposing offender effects his own ruin.

Moreover; let us regard the design of God as having for its object the honour, the wisdom, and the excellency of His moral government. If He gives laws, He designs thereby to shew Himself, what He really is, holy, just, and good; and if He proclaims promises, He designs to manifest the glorious fact that He is gracious and merciful. The promulgation itself is a design accomplished. But when any reject His laws and promises, they frustrate only their own benefit. What was rectorally designed for their good becomes, through their ungrateful abuse of it, the occasion of their death. "Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear," God's design has not failed on His part, be-

cause it was to give them appropriate and sufficient objective means, which in their own nature and tendency were calculated to reclaim and save them.

Once more; suppose the subject of contemplation to be the obedience unto death of the holy Saviour. This, as related to the Divine character, was designed to shew the justice and mercy, the wisdom and power of God; and, as related to the first sin, whereby Adam and his descendants were exposed to condemnation, God's design by it was to remove a gulf, which would have been otherwise impassable, between His justice and fallen sinners. But if we view the same object as related to moral government, God's design appears to be to lay a foundation by a price of infinite worth, which is objectively exhibited in the gospel, for the use and encouragement of all to whom the tidings come. This foundation laid in Zion, this refuge, this ark, is all-sufficient in itself, and declared to be so:—"Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded: . . . . but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed."* The obstruction in the way of justice, which requires a federal righteousness as a condition *sine quâ non* of justification, is now removed. God can be just through this medium, while He justifies one who must otherwise have been condemned. And since there is neither act nor design of God, open or concealed, that implies

* 1 Pet. ii. 6–8.—"This may refer to ver. 6, where Christ is said to be *laid* (the same word in the Greek with that which is here translated by *appointed*) as a chief corner-stone, elect and precious, on whom whosoever believeth shall not be confounded: the apostle then adds, that these unbelievers were *appointed* (viz., in their external vocation, as being taken into covenant with God) to be built on Christ by faith, but they stumbled by their unbelief at the word of the gospel, and consequently at this stumbling stone. And then, it is a high aggravating [of] the unbelief of the Jews, that they being God's peculiar people, should reject that salvation which was sent to them, and to the first offer of which they were *designed*, (Acts xiii. 26, 46, 47.) . . . . The *scope* of the apostle in this whole verse seems to be, to keep weak Christians from being offended at the multitude of unbelievers, and especially at their seeing Christ rejected by the Jewish rulers and doctors; and this he doth by pointing them to the Scripture, where all this was long since *foretold*, and therefore not to be wondered at now, nor be any occasion of *offence* to them. See the like, John xvi. 1, 4."—*Poole's Annot.* in loc.

any opposition whereby the sinner is restrained from building on this foundation, God will be clear when He judgeth. If what is in itself sufficient, and what God has proved and represented in the gospel to be so, be not actually received for salvation, the blame attaches only to him who rejects such means and testimony.

On the other hand, suppose we view Christ crucified as related to God's elect; the design of God was not merely to remove an obstruction for the exercise of moral government, but also to procure for them the gift of the Holy Spirit's influence, a saving union to Christ, and life everlasting. Towards these God's intention runs parallel with their existence; the seed of the kingdom, the gospel testimony concerning Christ, falls into good and honest hearts. By this fuller design of God towards them, which contains a blessing superadded to the other, a gracious influence, holy dispositions and habits, and the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ, are communicated. Hence the spirit of repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus. This illuminating and sanctifying principle produced by the Spirit, as the effect of an *efficaciously decretive* design, running parallel with that which is merely *rectoral*, enables the chosen sinner to obey the calling, and to bring forth fruit unto God; whereby he does not "draw back unto perdition, but believes to the saving of the soul."

Some have supposed, that God has a *contrary design* respecting the non-elect, whereby He reprobates, rejects, or secretly frustrates the sinner's efforts to come to Christ for salvation; but the abettors of this opinion, we may safely conclude, "know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm." If, indeed, it could be proved that God has such a reprobating decree, then a general call to sinners to repent, and believe in Christ for salvation, would be tantalising and delusive; but God *does* call sinners to repent and believe, as every part of the New Testament shews; therefore, on the principle here resisted, one decree would *oppose* another, which is absurd. Whatever the all-wise God effects is an index of His decree concerning it; He does call and command "all men everywhere to repent;" therefore He decreed to do it. But surely He does not *effect* the blindness, impenitence, unbelief, and hatred of men, of which the cause is exclusively in themselves; and consequently there is no Divine *purpose* to produce them.

From this discussion we may clearly perceive an important difference between the *rectoral* design of God, as founded in the

nature of moral government, and His *sovereign* design, founded on His prerogative, to communicate the influences of His Holy Spirit to insure compliance. The former shews what *ought* to be done by the subject of moral government; the latter shews what the sovereign Benefactor *will* do additionally. The one secures our *obligation* to believe and obey; the other our *actual* belief and obedience. In brief, the one is a *revelation*, addressed to the understanding and will of the subject; the other is an operation in the heart effecting a compliance. Indeed, the *rectoral* design denotes a decree as far as it goes, for God's *will* is in it; and without its exercise there could be no foundation for moral government. There is its termination fixed; beyond this it does not extend, and this it completely answers both "in them that are saved, and in them that perish." The other may be termed *sovereign*, or sovereignly decretive, because it is the exercise of mere good pleasure, or is the design of a Benefactor, which proceeds beyond what moral government, abstractedly considered, can require. The existence of the former is founded in the relation of Governor and governed; objective grace and equity on the part of God, and a natural capacity with freedom of choice on the part of man. In a word, the one design ends with the reasons of moral government; the other ends with the reasons of mere sovereign pleasure administered with wisdom.

It further appears that the *rectoral* intention, as to its *moral tendency*, is to render accountable creatures obedient and happy; so that nothing prevents this result but their own abused liberty. When mercies are most freely and unreservedly offered to man, and the most equitable laws enacted, and both, as to their moral tendency, to render the subject happy by obedience; we must conclude, that in every instance where this *tendency* is frustrated, the cause is exclusively in man himself. Though no design of God, strictly speaking, is frustrated, yet the *moral aptitude* of the rectoral design is as liable to be so, when a suitableness of disposition is not found in the subject, as he is liable to abuse his freedom. Where the understanding is dark, and the heart depraved, the most unbounded benevolence, the most gracious promises, the wisest laws, and the most astonishing mercies, objectively proposed, as they are in the gospel, are frustrated as to their genuine tendency.

When God convened the thousands of Israel at the foot of

Mount Sinai, and with the majesty of Godhead pronounced the ten commands, forbidding idolatry and other sins, was it not the genuine *moral tendency* of His legislative and *rectoral intention* to render the people to whom they were addressed, without exception, *obedient* to those laws, and, by a collateral use of the preceding promises, *happy* in complying? Yet, what was the result? Did this benevolent and equitable design of the Supreme Governor actually preserve them all from idolatry, irreverence, violation of the Sabbath, disobedience to parents, murder, adultery, theft, false testimony, and covetousness? Historical evidence decides in the negative. Some, indeed, feared, believed, loved, and obeyed. But who made them to differ from the others? Can there be any assignable cause besides the operation of the Holy Spirit in pursuance of a *sovereign* purpose?

Then only do the rectoral and sovereignly decretive intentions successfully coincide and harmonise in the subject, when he is actually conformed to the rule of moral government. When he uses and improves his capacities and opportunities to the Divine glory, when he conforms to the rule of right announced to him, when he is duly grateful and thankful for mercies bestowed, when he receives and improves exhibited favours; *then* he may be said to be conformed to the rectoral intention, while this effect must be ascribed to a sovereign design and operation in his heart. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of my power." "He worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." The rectoral design is replete with benevolence, which appears from the variety, suitableness, and wonderfully engaging nature of the *means* employed to promote the subject's happiness; if the event, therefore, prove disastrous to him, these are not the cause, (much less any secret frustrating decree,) but the innocent occasion of his fault and condemnation. This result is to be ascribed, not to the want of benevolence in the Governor, but to the sinfulness of the subject, whereby the genuine aptitude of the rectoral design is counteracted. In short, whenever the moral tendency of the rectoral design is frustrated or counteracted, it is owing to the *sinful defect* of man; and whenever the event is obedience and happiness, it is owing to the *sovereign influence* of God.

Section II.

Of Moral Government as it relates to the Claims of the Gospel, and the Obligations of Sinners to believe it.

Having considered the aspect and design of revelation, and especially the gospel, we now proceed to a few remarks, in a more direct way, on its claims; or, the *obligations* of men to receive the gospel and all the blessings it exhibits. The gospel finds all men *sinners*, condemned and perishing, morally impotent, inclined to evil, and hopeless; if, therefore, it addresses men at all, it must address them in that character. The evangelical testimony is an *absolute grant* from the Moral Governor to the unworthy, the needy, and the ruined; it denotes "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people," and not *good* people exclusively, who are qualified by grace to improve it. The *warrant* to believe unto righteousness and salvation is not a moral or spiritual qualification in the subject, but the testimony of God concerning His Son. A *warrant* from God to believe in Christ, or to receive Him and all His benefits, is a totally different consideration from a *moral fitness*, a consciousness of need, a good desire, a teachable disposition, a holy principle, &c. Who *may* believe is one thing; who *will* believe is another. All *may* believe, on the warrant of the Moral Governor; and some *will* believe, because enabled by sovereign grace.

The gospel, considered in itself and in its tendency, is a salutary stream issuing from under the throne of God, diffusing itself wider and wider, (though, through the depravity of man, subject to occasional interruptions,) until at length it is spread among all nations, and covers the whole earth as the waters cover the sea. Its progress, however, is directed with an alternate predominance of sovereignty and equity. In that it flows to one part, rather than another, how sovereign! But in that it has no respect of persons, making no difference between external rank or degrees of natural refinement, how equitable! No person or nation can claim it in equity; and wherever it is enjoyed, sovereign discrimination makes the difference. While none are denied, by any

prohibition or decree, some are favoured beyond their demerit. Still, wherever it actually comes, its aspect and design are as free and diffusive as the light.

Yet we must say, that the contents of the gospel are peculiarly adapted to certain dispositions and circumstances. Are any made sensible of their spiritual malady? how seasonable the information that Christ is the physician of souls! Are any burdened and heavy laden? Jesus promises freedom from useless toil and labour. Are any poor in spirit? the riches of grace and heaven itself are opened for their use. Do any hunger and thirst after righteousness? with righteousness and glory shall they be filled. Do they mourn over their own sins and those of others, the dishonour done to God, and the consequent miseries of sinners? the Saviour declares that they shall be comforted. In brief, the gospel proposes invaluable blessings suited to *every state* without exception. It even brings its righteousness near to "the stout-hearted who are far from righteousness." The rectoral design and the warrant are the same to all, which makes the *obligation* equal; and yet the *fact* is, that none will comply but such as are influenced by grace to feel their exigence. He who is made rich is first made poor; he who is truly satisfied is first made to hunger and thirst; he who enters in at the strait gate is first made to strive for an entrance; and, finally, he who enjoys eternal rest and salvation is first found a penitent, a believer, obedient and persevering.

The *obligation* of men to *credit* the testimony of God concerning His Son unto eternal life, and cordially to *receive* Christ as the "unspeakable gift," is not to be estimated by their moral ability, good inclination, or a well-disposed mind; but by their natural capacity of understanding and will, with unrestrained freedom, and by the moral *means* held forth by the Supreme Governor, as adapted in themselves, and according to their moral tendency, to do us good and make us blessed. Moral means are the grand medium whereby God governs His accountable creatures, and eminently so mankind under the gospel dispensation. If to the ignorant He affords the means of knowledge; to the guilty, pardon; to enemies, reconciliation; to the sorrowful, comfort; and to the needy, heavenly riches,—what can be more conclusive than that such characters are under obligation to receive and improve such means according as they really suit their cases, whether they are *sensible* of that suitableness or not? The

changeable feelings and sensibilities of men is too fickle and precarious a basis for moral obligation; for that basis must be something which is firm and stable, independently of the perpetually varying apprehensions and inclinations of the subject obliged. It must not be a leaden rule, that will take any form which human inclination may give it. The authority of God is not to be bent and contorted by the hand of man.

Though an authoritative *exhibition* of blessings really suitable to our wants strongly obliges us to compliance, yet the obligation is augmented, and becomes proportionally stronger, by the addition of *commands* and *threatenings*. This last circumstance belongs to every hearer of the gospel; for, first, God *commands* him to *repent*, that his sins may be blotted out,—to *awake* from the sleep of sin, that Christ may give him light,—to *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may be saved,—and to *strive* to enter in at the strait gate, in order that he may walk in the narrow way that leadeth unto life. Secondly, awful *threatenings* attend a refusal. Those who refuse to come and partake of the gospel supper incur displeasure, and that displeasure is expressed by a declaration that they shall not taste of it,—those who continue impenitent are threatened with perdition,—those who persist in unbelief shall be condemned,—those who obey not the gospel shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence and glorious power of the Judge.

It appears to me, I own, a surprising instance of the influence of prejudice, deduced from false principles and associations, that any intelligent persons, acknowledging the New Testament to be the expression of the Divine will, should scruple to confess, that Jesus Christ and all His benefits are there proposed to the acceptance of men as sinners. Is the gospel the *primary instrument* in the conversion of sinners, or is it not? Who can hesitate to answer in the affirmative? But if so, can it address men in any other character than as *unconverted?* And if they are addressed in that character, are they not strictly *obliged* to accept of the heavenly donation? The negative of this question is confronted by every principle of moral obligation. Besides, the rejection of Christ and His great salvation ranks with crimes the most aggravated, and involves the subject of it in the deepest guilt. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" He who rejects God's testimony "makes Him a liar;" and this is the

record, or testimony, "that God hath given to us [that is, in the gospel] eternal life, and this life is in His Son."* If the gospel of the kingdom is commanded to be *preached* to all the world, to every creature, that is, to *all men* in all nations, for the obedience of faith; how can the consequence be evaded, that those who hear are under indissoluble obligation to *believe* the record in its full extent?

But as the Holy Scriptures abound with calls, invitations, proposals, and inducements to sinners, in order that they may repent, believe, and obey, with awful denunciations for their want of compliance; so they abundantly testify concerning the ignorance, hardness of heart, moral impotence, and enmity of men to God, to His law, and the light of truth, while they continue in an unregenerate state. Now the question is, Are these two representations to be taken in their *full* extent, or is one of them to be *reduced* in meaning? The consistent Calvinist asserts the former; but Pelagians and Hyper-Calvinists (for they occasionally concur) plead for the latter. The Pelagians prefer an attempt to reduce the doctrine of human depravity; the Hyper-Calvinists, the extent of the gospel call. Now, it is remarkable that those respectively who hold both extremes, (which here amicably meet,) attempt their plan of reduction or extenuation on the very same principle—viz., that moral ability is requisite to constitute moral obligation. It is plain from Scripture, says the Pelagian, that the gospel call is general; *therefore,* all men must be possessed of moral ability to comply, which is incompatible with native depravity. But it is plain from Scripture, says the Hyper-Calvinist, that men in their unregenerate state are totally depraved; *therefore,* the gospel call is addressed only to those who are divinely quickened to feel their need of the gospel remedy.

The consistent Calvinist rejects both these inferences, and admits the above statements in their full extent of meaning. The reasons are, because neither can be denied without offering great violence to the plain declarations of God's Word; and because both may be perfectly reconciled on satisfactory principles. These principles are—the true grounds of moral obligation, and the difference between the rectoral and the sovereign designs of God. It is demonstrable, that moral ability being requisite to constitute human obligation is a false assumption. If anything

* See 1 John v. 9–13.

more be required than a *natural* capacity, *freedom* of will, and moral *means*, innumerable absurd consequences would necessarily follow; especially this one, that the direct way to be freed from all moral obligation would be to plunge into the depth of moral depravity, and the best mode of getting rid of pursuing vengeance from God would be to blaspheme and oppose Him! That there is an important difference between the rectoral and sovereign design of God has been shewn in the preceding pages; nor is it difficult to perceive how this difference fairly solves the seeming inconsistency. If man, however depraved, retains the grounds of accountability, it is evident that the *rectoral* intention in the general call of the gospel does not require, as a necessary condition for its legitimate exercise, any moral ability in the subject; while the *sovereign* intention has the fullest scope, without any clashing or interference, in its exercise on the hearts of God's elect, whereby the call becomes effectual for their salvation.

In order that there might be a suitable, reasonable, and consistent ground of believing in Christ for salvation, we must infer that those parts of Holy Writ which represent Christ as "the Saviour of the world," which affirm that "He died for all," that He is a "propitiation for the sins of the whole world," and that "He gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time," ought not to be interpreted as denoting only the elect who are eventually saved from sin and misery. What possible good end can be answered by *restricting* such expressions? The restricted interpretation is doubtless intended for the avoidance of some injurious consequence; such as that Christ would die in vain for some, or that all must be saved, &c. But these consequences do not follow, except on an assumed and false notion of the *price* of redemption and *redemption* itself denoting the same thing. These two ideas are essentially different, as related to different objects. For what is *redemption*, in accurate thought, but the *actual deliverance* of the subject from some personal evil, and, in the present case, from condemnation, sin, and misery? But is any person thus delivered before he is born? And what is the *price* of redemption but a sacrifice of infinite worth presented to the holy and just Moral Governor, to answer certain important ends? One of these ends is the actual redemption or deliverance of God's chosen, by the communication of the Holy Spirit, union to Christ, justification, regeneration, sanctification, and persevering grace, to be crowned

with glory. Another end is, to afford an adequate basis for the rectoral design of God in proposing Christ and His benefits to sinners in general when addressed by the gospel call. When we assert, therefore, that the rectoral design, founded on the *price* of redemption, extends to all men,—in the same sense as the original and subsequent promises, and innumerable other blessings that perpetually flow from the Father of lights,—justice is done to the universal mode of expression in the Scripture testimony, while it stands perfectly consistent with the sovereign designation of that price in the actual redemption of God's elect.

If, as before proved, reconciliation is exhibited in the gospel call to any who are not, and will not be reconciled; if God is *in Christ* making a proposal of "reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" it follows that the price of redemption has the extent above mentioned in the plan of Divine government. Again, if reconciliation to God is proposed, by the persuasions, entreaties, and affectionate importunities of His word and ambassadors, as it expressly and most evidently is, there must be a true and rational, as opposed to a fallacious and delusive *ground* of reconciliation. And what can this be but an infinite and therefore indefinite price? And if God invites to the great supper "the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind," yea, many who "pray to be excused," and who never come, the provision must, in all consistency and propriety of meaning, have been rectorally *designed* for them, in virtue of the great sacrifice; as much designed as a feast is for one who being invited to partake of it sends a message that "he cannot come."

It is of importance to remark, that the *price* of redemption—the meritorious ransom, or the infinite *merit* of the Saviour—and *redemption* itself, which is actual deliverance, have different *objects*, and have their *sources* in different relations.

First, They have different *objects*. The *redemption* itself has for its objects God's *elect*, the subjects of actual deliverance. These, in due time, are called and "redeemed from among men" by God the Holy Spirit "working in them both to will and to do of His own good pleasure," who also is the Spirit of Christ. But the *meritorious price* has for its immediate object *God*, the infinitely holy, just, and equitable Governor, to whom it is presented, "an offering and *sacrifice to God* for a sweet-smelling savour." It was presented for *His* acceptance, as the basis of a

ministry of reconciliation to be sent among all nations, and to be addressed to every human creature; and as the basis of actual deliverance from guilt and condemnation, from sin and misery, to all who should be effectually called. On this great sacrifice is founded God's *rectoral* intention towards all mankind, and His *sovereign* intention towards His chosen; He therefore is the immediate object to whom it was presented, that by virtue of it He might accomplish these two principal ends.

Secondly, They have their *sources* in different relations. These relations, as in *God*, are equity and sovereignty; the price referring to the former, and redemption, which is a personal deliverance, having respect to the latter. The scheme, indeed, as a whole, originates in an infinitely wise and sovereign benevolence, but the subordinate parts have these essential distinctions. Again, these relations, as in *Christ*, are His mediatorship and suretyship; the price regarding and flowing from the former, and redemption relating to and resulting from the latter. *Mediatorship* and merit are the immediate source of the rectoral design and of all gospel offers; but *suretyship* and a rightful "power over all flesh" are the immediate spring of actual redemption. From the *suretyship* of Christ, in virtue of His mediatorial sacrifice, flow the exertion of His power, His quickening influence, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and perseverance. Christ as a Surety is the proximate fountain of these blessings, which, according to sovereign designation, are communicated only to persons who eventually love God and enjoy heaven,—the "chosen, the called, the faithful," and the "blessed of the Father," according to His sovereign, unfathomable wisdom and love.

To bring this discussion to a close: every promised blessing, proposed to mankind by the Moral Governor, flows through the mediation and merits of Christ; and since overtures of pardon and reconciliation are made to sinners, many of whom are eventually not pardoned and reconciled, how can the consequence be avoided, that the *provision*, in its rectoral design, must be more extensive than actual salvation? Must it not be equally so with the *overture?* And must not the advantages proposed be the purchase of the Mediator? If the overture have no other basis than the foreseen *aversion* of the sinner to the blessings proposed to him, then the import of the proposal would be, If you believe a *falsehood*, God is willing to bestow upon you pardon and life! For how can

the invitation, command, or threatening be otherwise than false and delusive, if the provision of sacrifice and merit be designed exclusively for elect sinners? How can any other have a *warrant* to believe the testimony concerning Christ crucified? On this principle, every person must know his *election* before he has any warrant to believe; or if he believe the testimony without this knowledge, he is required to believe without evidence, and to act the part of a presumptuous intruder in order to acquire it.—We conclude, therefore, first, that every man addressed by the gospel is under *obligation* to receive Christ and His benefits in virtue of the meritorious price of redemption being rectorally designed for him as one of the human race;* and, secondly, that the elect

* That illustrious Reformer and admirable writer, Calvin, has treated much of predestination and the doctrines of special grace; but though his works consist of nine volumes folio, I do not think that there is one sentence in them that militates against the above representation; and in many places he expresses himself in a manner that abundantly justifies it. The following quotations may serve as a specimen:—"Matt. xxvi. 28. Sub multorum nomine *non partem* mundi tantum designat, sed *totum humanum genus*. Dum ad sacram mensam accedimus, non solum hæc generalis cogitatio in mentem veniat, *redemptum Christi sanguine esse mundum;* sed pro se quisque reputet peccata sua expiata esse."—"Rom. v. 18. *Communem omnium gratiam facit*, quia *omnibus exposita est*, non quod ad omnes extendatur re ipsa. Nam etsi *passus est Christus pro peccatis totius mundi*, atque *omnibus indifferenter, Dei benignitate, offeretur;* non tamen omnes apprehendunt."

When Calvin wrote his celebrated "Christian Institutes," he was but a young man, about seven-and-twenty years of age, a time when it cannot be supposed that his judgment was matured on some theological points of peculiar difficulty. We may, therefore, naturally expect his more perfect and settled thoughts in his subsequent expositions of the Holy Scriptures. But what is very remarkable, his last will, drawn up by himself in the fifty-fifth year of his age, and about one month before his death, has these expressions:—"Testor etiam ac profiteor me suppliciter ab eo petere, ut ita me ablutum et mundatum velit sanguine summi Redemptoris, *effuso pro humani generis peccatis*, ut mihi liceat apud tribunal ipsius consistere sub ipsius Redemptoris imagine." Had it not been his design to express an important sentiment by the clause printed here in italics, a sentiment which had been familiar to his mind, it is difficult to account for his introducing it at all on so solemn an occasion; since the sense would have been complete without it.

A remark not very dissimilar might be made on the deservedly celebrated Dr John Owen. When he wrote his treatise entitled "Salus Electorum, Sanguis Jesu," he was about thirty-two years of age; but it was in an advanced period of his life that he warmly recommended Polhill's treatise on the "Divine Will;" of which he says, "The *argumentative* part of this book is generally suited unto the genius of the age past, wherein *accuracy and strictness of reason bare sway*." And yet this treatise, to which Dr Owen wrote a recommendatory preface, among other forcible arguments has the following:—"If Christ did no way die for all men, which way shall the truth of these general promises be made out?—'Whosoever will may take of the water of life.' What! though Christ never bought it for him? 'Who-

have no warrant besides this for believing, there being no other basis of belief for any one of mankind. The sovereign purpose of God to take away the blindness, hardness, and enmity of some, and by the operation of His Holy Spirit to create them anew in Christ Jesus, is a process totally different, and proceeds from a

soever believes shall be saved.' What! though there were no λύτρον, no *price* paid for him? Surely the gospel knows no water of life but which Christ purchased, nor way of salvation but by a λύτρον, a *price* paid. If Christ *no way* died for *all* men, how can those promises stand *true?* All men, if they believe, shall be saved; saved, but how? Shall they be saved by a λύτρον, or *price* of redemption? there was none at all paid for them; the *immense value* of Christ's death doth not make it a *price* as to them for whom He died not; or shall they be saved without a λύτρον, or *price?* God's unsatisfied justice cannot suffer it, His minatory law cannot bear it, neither doth the gospel know any such way of salvation; take it either way, the *truth* of those promises cannot be vindicated, unless we say that Christ died for *all* men. No reprobate ever did or will believe, yet the promise must be *true*, and true *antecedently* to the faith or unbelief of men: *true*, because it is the promise of God; and *antecedently* true, because else it could not be the object of *faith*. I argue from the *ministers' commission*, which is, 'Go preach the gospel to every creature.' By virtue of this, they command all men everywhere to repent; and to induce them thereunto they open a door of hope to them, and to raise up that hope they set forth Jesus Christ evidently before their eyes, as if He were crucified among them. In all their pathetical beseechings, *God Himself beseeches*, (2 Cor. v. 28;) in all their loud outcries, Wisdom herself *cries out*, (Prov. viii. 1, 4;) in all their earnest expostulations, Christ himself *stands at the door and knocks*, (Rev. iii. 20.) But if Christ *no way* died for *all men*, how came the ministers' commission to be so large? They command men to repent that their sins may be blotted out; but how can their sins be blotted out for whom Christ was not *made sin?* Why should *they* come to that feast for whom nothing is *prepared?* I argue from the *unbelief* of men, which is wonderfully aggravated in Scripture. Great salvation is prepared, but *unbelief neglects it*, (Heb. ii. 3;) eternal rest is promised, but *unbelief comes short of it*, (Heb. iv. 1;) the kingdom of heaven comes nigh to men, but *unbelief draws back from it*, (Heb. x. 39;) God himself bears witness that there is life in His Son, even for *all if they believe*, but unbelief says *No* to it, and doth what it can *to make Him a liar*, (1 John v. 10.) How can those men neglect salvation for whom it was never prepared? How can they fall short of eternal rest for whom it was never purchased? or draw back from the kingdom of heaven which never approached unto them? How can there be life in Christ for those for whom He never died? and if not, which way doth their *unbelief* give God the *lie?*"—*Polhill on the Divine Will considered in its Eternal Decrees, and Holy Execution of them*, p. 282, &c.

The great Mr Charnock, who for depth of penetration and accuracy of judgment was equalled by few, and to whom Dr Owen was peculiarly attached, expresses himself thus:—"The wrath of God was so fully *appeased* by it, [the death of Christ,] His justice so fully *satisfied*, that there is *no bar* to a re-admission into His favour, and the enjoyment of the privileges *purchased* by it, but *man's unbelief*. The blood of Christ is a stream whereof *all men* may drink, an ocean wherein *all men* may bathe. If any perished by the biting of the fiery serpent, it was not for want of a remedy in *God's institution*, but from wilfulness in themselves. The

different source. In a word, Jesus Christ, in the plan of DIVINE GOVERNMENT, is the appointed "Saviour of all men;" but, in the plan of DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY, with an infallible and further *speciality* of intention, "of those that believe" through gracious influence, in virtue of Christ's suretyship as well as His merits.

antitype answers to the type, and wants no more a sufficiency to procure a spiritual good, than that to effect the cure of the body. He is therefore called *the Saviour of the world*, (1 John iv. 14.) When the apostle saith, (Rom. x. 9,) 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe with thy heart, *thou shalt be saved*,' he speaks to *every man* that shall hear that sentence. If all the men in the world were united to Him by faith, there could not be any more required of Christ for their salvation than *what He hath already acted;* for it is a sacrifice of *infinite value*, and infinite knows *no limits*. Since it was sufficient to satisfy *infinite justice*, it is sufficient to save an inexpressible number, and the virtue of it in saving *one* argues a virtue in it to save *all* upon the same condition. If men therefore perish, it is not for want of value, or virtue, or acceptableness in this *sacrifice*, but for want of answering the terms upon which the enjoyment of the benefits of it is proposed. If a man will shut his eyes against the light of the sun, it argues an obstinacy in the person, not any defect in the sun itself."—*Charnock's Discourse on the Acceptableness of Christ's Death.* His "Discourse on Reconciliation" is full of the same sentiment; see his Works, vol. ii., pp. 564, 170, 212, 219.

Section III.

Of Moral Government as it relates to the Rule, Objects, Process, Effects, and Consequences of the Final Judgment.

A VARIETY of topics may suggest the probability of a future state of retribution, and of some public display of the final issue of human probation; but the Supreme Governor has not left us to mere conjecture. Strong inferences, indeed, might be drawn from the dictates of conscience, from the natural consequences of virtue and vice, from the mixture of good and evil in the present state, and from the consideration of a righteous Judge making some essential and prominent difference between the righteous and the wicked; but in His written word, God has given us a clear and decisive account of a judgment to come,—an account so plain, so circumstantial, and so awful, that it is difficult to conceive anything more so. For reasons before adduced, under the Mosaic theocracy the doctrine of rewards and punishments was in a great measure confined to temporal good and evil. It is not to be supposed, however, that the serious and attentive part of the Jews, even from the time of Enoch or Adam, had not a traditionary knowledge of a future judgment, as well as a future state. And this we may conclude the rather, because the patriarchs acted on this principle. Of Abraham it is expressly said, "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."* They all "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." And on their conduct the inspired penman observes:—"For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."†

However sparingly future sanctions are intimated in the Mosaic legislation, for wise purposes to which I have before alluded, we are not to suppose that Moses himself was not acquainted with a

* Heb. xi. 10. † Ver. 14-16.

future state. For "by faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ [or, *for Christ,* the promised Messiah] greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for *he had respect to the recompense of the reward.*" * The sacred writer, after noticing a number of ancient worthies, including "David, Samuel, and the prophets," observes, "and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, *that they might obtain a better resurrection.*" †

Not to insist on many other passages in the Old Testament where the doctrine of a future judgment is decidedly implied, the following may be noticed:—"Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he *render to every man according to his works.*" ‡ "The Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment; and *he shall judge the world in righteousness.*" § "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that *for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*" ‖ "For God shall *bring every work into judgment,* with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." ¶ "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even *to give every man according to his ways,* and according to the fruit of his doings." ** "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, [*i.e.,* all terrestrial kingdoms abolished,] and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. . . . . And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." ††

Is it conceivable that these and many other similar passages in

* Heb. xi. 24–26. † Ver. 35. ‡ Prov. xxiv. 12.
§ Ps. ix. 7, 8. ‖ Eccles. xi. 9. ¶ Eccles. xii. 14.
** Jer. xvii. 10, also xxxii. 19. †† Dan. vii. 9, 10, xii. 2, 3.

the Old Testament had their meaning exhausted in reference to temporal scenes? Are they not most naturally calculated to direct the views of men to the end of life, the conclusion of time, and the awful realities of a future judgment of the righteous and the wicked? The Sadducees among the Jews, indeed, denied a judgment to come; but they also denied the existence of angels and of human souls after death. And the circumstance of their being an heretical exception, is a proof of the doctrine they rejected being regarded as orthodox. Besides, the pointed manner in which they are reproved by Christ's harbinger,* and the view in which Christ himself regarded their doctrine, shew that they did not *understand the Scriptures.* † On a certain occasion our Lord instituted an argument, even from the writings of Moses, to whose writings and legislation they professed a peculiar attachment, in proof of the doctrine of the resurrection as indisputably implied in well-known phrases which they contain; and it appears from the context that He "put the Sadducees to silence." ‡

So refulgent is the light of the New Testament on the doctrine of a final judgment and the resurrection, that even the modern Sadducees, who deny the existence of angels and human souls in a separate state, admit it into their meagre system, while they renounce almost every other doctrine peculiar to Christianity. How sublime and impressive is our Lord's description of the last judgment!—"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . . Then shall he say also unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." § This doctrine the apostles had in commission to declare:—"And Jesus commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." ‖

* Matt. iii. 7. † Matt. xvi. 6–12. ‡ Matt. xxii. 23–34.
§ Matt. xxv. 31 46. ‖ Acts x. 42.

"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. . . . . For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ."* "Wherefore we labour [or, endeavour] that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done; whether it be good or bad."†

From these passages of inspiration (though but few out of many) nothing need be plainer than the appointment of a *judgment to come*. And yet, such is the perversity of the human mind, the *Sadducean* and *mystic* extremes (for extremes often meet) unite in discarding it. Some in the apostolic days, bearing the name of Christians, maintained that the resurrection had then taken place: —"And their word will eat as doth a canker [or, gangrene:] of whom is Hymeneus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some."‡ And there are those in the present day who draw similar conclusions, substituting for arguments pretended visions. The immediate business of the present discussion is not to dispute with such men, but to inquire what is the *rule* of the final judgment,—what are the proper *objects* of it,—what is the *process*, as to the respective influence of *equity* and *sovereignty*,—and what are the *effects*, especially the equitable consequences of all.

I. We begin with observing that the RULE of final judgment can be no other than that of moral government. For public judgment, from its very nature, does not *create* a law for the purpose, but only tries the characters and works of men according to a law already existing, and which was the standard of obedience in a state of probation. It has been before shewn, that the rule of moral government, which may be denominated the *moral law*, has its ultimate foundation in the related characters of the Governor and the governed. Hence it is plain that obligations vary together with circumstances and relations; and that moral obligation, moral law, and constituted relations are co-existent. There is no obligation without law, nor is there any law without constituted relation; the one resulting from the other as a necessary effect. The only possible way, therefore, of exempting us from obligation to the moral law, whether in this life or in any future period, is to destroy our existence. This law, the rule of

* Rom. xiv. 9. 10. † 2 Cor. v. 9. 10. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 17. 18.

right and wrong, will be the standard of measure in judgment, the impartial balance to weigh the varied characters and actions of mankind. By this law will be judged the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles, confessors, and martyrs, as well as the ignorant and wicked, who know not God and obey not the gospel. No evangelical liberty, extend it to any conceivable degree, can form an exemption from being obliged here, and judged hereafter, by this rule.

II. Respecting the immediate OBJECTS of inquiry with the Supreme Judge, it will not be demanded, By what *aids* did you perform such acts of obedience? or, *Whence* had you holy dispositions? For as this constitutes no part of the rule which is common to all who have equal capacities and objective means, it can be no object of judicial proceedings. What the Lawgiver *commands*, the Judge *requires*. Therefore, the *source* of ability, the Divine concurrence in all human acts, how much or how little men have been assisted beyond their deserts to discharge incumbent duty, is out of the question. But the immediate objects of inquiry must be—

First, What *moral means* and opportunities of obedience and conformity to Divine law have you enjoyed? "That servant, who knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes: for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men [and God, the righteous Governor and Judge] have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Thus, according to the nature and degree of *moral means*, in connexion with natural capacities, must be the nature and the degree of obligation; with which sovereign influence and regenerating grace must not be confounded. For, on such natural capacities and moral means as constitute a sufficient basis of obligation, the accountable creature has an equitable claim; but on sovereign influence none at all, otherwise "grace would be no more grace."

Secondly, Another immediate object of inquiry must be, What have you *been* in your state of probation, what have you *done* or *omitted*, and what *are* you now? Have you been sincere or hypocritical in your profession of obedience and service? How have you improved your talents and opportunities? Have you

sincerely repented, and cordially believed my testimony, as I required? Have you loved me supremely, gratefully received what blessings I bestowed upon you, and done what I commanded you? And what is your present character according to my holy law? "The kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. . . . . After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. . . . . Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. . . . . Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father; . . . . for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. . . . . Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; . . . . for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. . . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." *

III. But what, in this awful PROCESS, this most solemn and interesting of all transactions, is the respective influence of Divine equity and sovereignty? In reply, I observe—

First, It is but *equitable* that those who are deficient in moral rectitude should be condemned according to their abuse of the capacities, opportunities, and moral means they enjoyed. "For we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth. . . . . O man, despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and *revelation of the righteous judgment of God:* who will *render to every man according to his deeds:* . . . . to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." † The *just* wages of sin is *death,* even that death which stands

* Matt. xxv. passim. † Rom. ii. 2–9.

opposed to *life eternal.* It is a *righteous* thing with God, the Supreme Arbiter, to recompense tribulation to unruly troublers of society, and especially of the good; and "to take vengeance on them who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Secondly, On the other hand, seeing that, on account of apostasy and personal disobedience, "every mouth is stopped, and all the world is become *guilty* before God," no one could be acquitted in judgment without the interposition of *sovereign favour.* "If thou, Lord, shouldst *mark* iniquity, [that is, without the intervention of mercy,] O Lord, who shall stand?" At the great decisive day it will appear in the clearest light, that it was an act of sovereign favour to *defer* the full punishment of sin, and to constitute a plan of mercy which admitted of delay. And, more especially, it will appear to have been owing to a succession of sovereign acts that any sinner is *prepared* for an honourable acquittal; and particularly that any of the fallen race are made partakers of *justification,* whereby they are pardoned and "accepted in the Beloved;" of *regeneration,* whereby the dead in sin are made alive to God by the operation of the Holy Spirit; of *adoption,* by virtue of which the "outcasts" are brought into God's family; of progressive *sanctification,* whereby they are renewed in the spirit of their mind, changed from sinfulness to holiness, and transformed "from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord;" and, finally, of *preservation,* in soul and body, whereby they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

It is by a *sovereign* constitution, and by virtue of their union to Christ, that the *best* of characters will be *acquitted* in judgment; for in many things "all offend," and were the Judge to proceed in *strict justice* to mark the failures of the pardoned, renewed, adopted, and sanctified, none would be able to endure the scrutiny. Besides, it will then appear with superior evidence, that the endless felicity on which they enter was *prepared* for them by sovereign favour. Their inheritance was *designed* for them before they had a being, and it will be manifest that their services bore no adequate proportion to the reward, whether we consider the quality, the quantity, or the duration of those services. Then Enoch, who so closely walked with God,—Noah, who so long preached righteousness,—Abraham, who was so strong in faith,—Moses, who was so faithful a servant in God's house,—Job, whose patience was so dis-

tinguished,—David, the sweet singer of Israel, so devout himself, and whose compositions have enlivened the devotions of others for so many ages,—that John, who was a burning and shining light among a benighted people, and the other John, whose love was so ardent and expansive,—Paul, who laboured more abundantly than all his associates in the Christian ministry,—martyrs who shed their blood in the cause of truth and holiness,—and every righteous character at that tribunal;—ALL will confess themselves to have been "unprofitable servants."

Thirdly, Though strict equity would condemn as deficient the least imperfect of human characters, yet, if we take into account the sovereign plan and operations of the Supreme Governor as the *source* of difference in character and obedience, the honourable acquittal and remuneration of the blessed will appear to rest on equitable grounds. For the *provision* made in the appointment of a Mediator, the *favour* conferred in the imputation of His worthiness, the *mode* adopted in the communication of purity of heart, and the *help* afforded for overcoming the world, the flesh, and the tempter, were by no means incompatible with the rights of God. Such is the profundity of His wisdom in the grand contrivance of mediation, that He will appear *just* in being the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. "Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other." They who shall be "found in him," invested with his robe of righteousness, "the righteousness which is of God by faith," are "perfected for ever."

That there should be made a great and lasting *difference* between the righteous and the unrighteous,—between penitents who have mourned for sin, hated and forsaken it,—believers who received God's testimony,—obedient individuals who took up their cross daily to follow Christ through the tribulations of time,—good and faithful servants who improved their talents for the glory of God, and the good of men;—that there should be a difference between these and the opposite characters, all must allow to be *equitable.* The Supreme Governor proposes the reward conditionally; as far, therefore, as the condition is performed, as to the mode appointed for obtaining *righteousness,* which gives a title, and *holiness,* consisting in all good "conversation and godliness," which renders meet for heaven, it can be no infringement of the rights of justice that the one is provided for us, and the other wrought in us by a sovereign power.

IV. We come now to inquire, What will be the EFFECTS and consequences of the final judgment? To the righteous, it is universally allowed, will be allotted a happiness complete and universal; a happiness which implies the purity of their nature, freedom from penal evil, and a full and uninterrupted enjoyment of God the chief good,—God their "exceeding joy," the "strength of their heart and their portion for ever." The *life* eternal into which they shall now enter will include the perfection of their nature, and their *well-being* through everlasting ages. But, on the contrary, the miseries of the wicked will be great. What is there terrible in nature, or painful to humanity, which has not been employed by the righteous Governor to represent their miseries? And, indeed, the moral impurity of their nature will prove as constant fuel to the fire of hell. To which we may add, as no small part of their woe, perpetual molestations and reproaches from every object that presents itself. Even in this life, how different is the sensation excited by a view of a number of innocent children, or an assembly of pious and benevolent men, engaged in Divine worship, or consulting to promote the good of others, compared with what is felt by a view of a gang of robbers, or a lawless banditti! What can exceed the woe of banishment "from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power," accompanied with a sense of His displeasure, an accusing conscience, "the worm that never dieth," continued iniquity, and insulting and tormenting ghosts: in a word, the loss of the chief good, and a consciousness of that loss!

These are the *effects* of the awful process we have been contemplating, and it is maintained that the consequences are *permanent*, according to right reason as well as the plain testimony of Scripture. But as the perpetuity of penal evil has been called in question by persons of different sentiments on other points; as it has been formerly asserted by Origen, and of late revived by theological writers in America and England, and seems to grow fashionable with speculative men in this and other countries, that the misery of the wicked will not be everlasting,—I shall submit a few remarks on the subject. In this controversy (for it has acquired a controversial form) the first point of investigation should be, What is the *due* of a moral agent as the transgressor of a Divine law which is holy, just, and good? When this is clearly ascertained, no doubt can remain with respect to the

question, What is *equitable* conduct in the Supreme Governor and Judge towards the transgressor, when the operations of mercy are not taken into the account? Now, if the *desert* of moral evil be not a *penal* natural evil, an *accountable* creature may sin with *impunity*, which involves contradictory ideas. But what is this penal natural evil? Does it arise from the arbitrary frown and continued severity of the Judge, from inflictions incompatible with benevolence, or from the pressure of omnipotence directed by mere will against a feeble creature? This idea, or something similar, seems to be the basis of the universal restoration, when its advocates urge the *injustice* of perpetual suffering for a temporary offence. But if we examine the truth of ideas, and divest them of popular and figurative language, we shall find no room for any supposition of the kind. When an *infliction* of punishment is threatened, it is a declaration of what will be the dreadful *effect* to the sufferer, or the connexion in the nature of things between the offence and its consequence. As it is the *nature* of fire to burn, and of a flame to consume the moth that rushes into it; so it is the *nature* of an infinitely holy and just Being to afflict and render miserable every being of an opposite quality. "For our God is a consuming fire."

Properly speaking, God is no further opposed to the sufferer by an act of will, than His will is indicative of His nature. And as His nature is invariable, there appears no conceivable way of being freed from penal evil but by a change in the moral qualities of the sufferer. The proper *cause* of suffering is in the subject; while unchangeable purity is only the innocent *occasion*. The sun's light offends and pains a diseased eye, but the cause of pain is the disease, while the ever-shining sun is only the source of light and heat, which in their own nature are excellent qualities. That misery which proceeds from a morally-depraved nature will be so far from receiving mitigation from the Divine benevolence, while that depravity continues, that the contemplation of it by the subject will increase the anguish. The more amiable and glorious God is in Himself, the more intolerable will be a conscious contrariety to Him. All objective considerations are but *moral means*, and from all just views of their nature these, however excellent and glorious, cannot *insure* a change of heart in the subject, though continued for ever. His free nature, for the very consideration that it is *free*, when left to itself on the ground of

mere equity, *may* revolt for ever, and if *depraved* it necessarily *must*, except a *miracle* of mercy intervene. What other mode conceivable is there in the nature of things whereby a change may be effected? As soon may rivers ascend to their fountains, matter specifically heavy recede from the centre of gravity, or any settled law of nature be reversed, as penal evil cease to exist in a guilty and depraved subject. And even a miracle of mercy can be supposed to effect a change from misery to happiness, only by a removal of the subject's guilt, and the purification of his nature.

To begin this controversy, therefore, with an examination of scriptural phrases, such as "for ever," "for ever and ever," "eternal," "everlasting," and the like, as if there were no evidence of the doctrine, that never-ending pain is the just wages of sin, *prior* to the consideration of such phrases, is not a fair procedure. This is the ground which the advocates of universal restoration wish to hold; but the true state of the question is, Whether God has given us positive evidence, a degree of evidence sufficient to engage our belief, that He will so far *supersede the claims of strict equity by an act of sovereign favour* as to change the nature of the sufferers, and thus liberate the subjects of penal suffering from the slavery of sin and the misery it deserves, by constituting them righteous, and converting them from sin to holiness. To suppose that punishment itself (or *correction*, as the persons I have in view choose to call it) will effect a reformation, betrays great inattention to the *nature* of that evil which any correction is thought capable of removing. For if penal evil consist not in a positive infliction from the *mere pleasure* of God,—as if any way opposite to His infinite benevolence in general, or His rectoral benevolence to the sufferer in particular,—but in a *consciousness* of defect, of contrariety to rectitude, to holiness, and to every Divine perfection, the assumption of a mitigation, or a removal of the evil by its continuance, is unfounded.

We conclude, then, that *prior* to scriptural evidence on either side, the verdict, in point of *equity*, is on the side of *perpetual* suffering. For the same reason that there should be *any* punishment, abstracted from scriptural evidence, it must be *perpetual*, because it is not founded on the *bare will* of the Supreme Governor, but on the guilt and depravity of the subject, which qualities, if at all removed, must be removed by a sovereign act of mercy. But mercy, from its very nature, can be no further known

by us than it is revealed. The remaining question, therefore, is to this effect—Where is the *evidence* that God will, by an act of *sovereign mercy*, put a period to what must otherwise continue, and rescue infernal prisoners from guilt and depravity, blasphemy and rebellion, with which misery and woe are inseparably connected? A full discussion of this question, and of the whole subject on this ground, which I presume is the only fair ground, does not comport with my plan in this Essay.* Yet as there are some things relating to the subject circulated in a popular form, † and with no small degree of confidence, which appear to militate against what I have now advanced, I shall take some notice of them.

Thus the Universalist argues :—"The Jews reject Christ and His religion upon as good ground as you reject the universal restoration, and perhaps better; for you have nothing to plead against the restoration, but some threatenings of punishments which are called *everlasting* or *eternal* in our translation; but they plead express promises of the *everlasting* continuance of their church-state, in opposition to Christianity." ‡ The propriety of the preceding remarks respecting the right mode of conducting the inquiry, is fully apparent from the sophistical argument now quoted. "Nothing to plead against the restoration but some threatenings of punishments." Yes; we plead guilt unpardoned, depravity unremoved, the sinful impotence of the offender, the inefficacy of all moral means whatever, and the operations of equity. "The Jews reject Christ and His religion upon as good ground as you reject the universal restoration." No; for the claims of Christ and His religion were substantiated by wisdom and miracles, while there was no natural, infallible, or equitable connexion between the *design* of the Jewish church-state and the rejection of the Messiah. The connexion was of their own making, and had no existence but in their mistaken views of Moses and his law, of Christ and His gospel. Whereas the connexion that subsists between an unholy disposition and suffering is founded in the nature of things, and the only conceivable mode of terminating penal evil is to remove the sinful cause; and except this be done by sovereign, gracious influence, the evil must continue. Con-

* On the general subject of the universal restoration, the reader may consult Dr Jonathan Edwards's Answer to Dr Chauncy.

† By Mr Winchester, in his "Dialogues on the Universal Restoration," Second Edit., Lond., 1792.

‡ Univ. Restor., p. 16.

sequently, the force of the *terms* expressing the duration of both dispensations being *equal*, the conclusion must be as unequal as the connexions before mentioned.

The Universalist again pleads:—"Your reasoning would be conclusive, upon the supposition that there are two eternal principles—viz., *good* and *evil*. If it can be proved that evil is co-existent with goodness, that it hath always been; then the absolute eternity of sin and misery may be easily inferred. This is the true foundation of endless misery, and it came from the pagan theology."* It seems, then, that evil may co-exist with goodness for *ages of ages*, but may not any longer, without running into Manicheism. The question is not at present, What is the sovereign good pleasure of God respecting the termination of penal evil? but, Whether it is inconsistent with the Divine perfections to perpetuate the sufferings of the guilty? If not inconsistent to continue them for a thousand years, by what rule can we draw a boundary? Is it by the rule of exactly proportioning the punishment to the crime? We allow such a rule; but we also maintain that a diversity of *degrees* is adequate to preserve an equitable proportion, without having recourse to a temporary *duration*. Few will question that there are numerous degrees on the scale of happiness; why, then, should it be doubted that there are degrees greatly varied on the scale of sufferings?

Besides, the argument founded on the incompatibility of the everlasting co-existence of good and evil proves too much, and involves the annihilation of creatures as necessary. For a creature without *any* evil is an absolute impossibility, that is, the evil of comparative defect; therefore, some evil must necessarily co-exist with all created being. Consequently, this argument, if it have any force, would require not only the removal of penal evil from the subject, but also his annihilation. God alone is absolutely good, from eternity to eternity, and therefore the only mode of preventing *all* evil is not to afford existence to any creature. But on the subject in general we may ask, Of what attribute would the rights be infringed, of what perfection would the glory be eclipsed, by not liberating a guilty, polluted, and rebellious prisoner? Is there any spot in the universe where he *could* be happy without an *internal* change? Are not these prisoners *offenders*, unceasing offenders, as well as sufferers? How absurd the notion

* Univ. Restor., p. 30.

that hell is a prison for the *innocent* who are confined by arbitrary power in consideration of a few past offences, and who would be very good, obedient, and happy, were they emancipated! Neither Scripture, nor sound reason, acknowledges any such prisoners.

We again ask, Are continued sufferings contrary to *equity?* If so, there would be a ground of *claim* on deliverance, which the sufferer, though still unchanged, might plead as his *due.* But how preposterous the thought! Are continued sufferings contrary to *benevolence?* Then, for a period called *ages of ages,* God, in punishing offenders, opposing rebels, or leaving them to themselves, would act in contrariety to His benevolent nature. How impious to imagine it! Is the continuance of sufferings contrary to *wisdom?* It is sufficient to say, that we can have no *data,* from the nature of the case, to determine what is, or is not, conformable to wisdom, except what God himself has revealed; which refers to *another* question. Only He can determine what is consistent with infinite wisdom, and it is our province to learn His declared will. *Justice* is founded on relations, but the exercise of *mercy* is founded on supreme and infinitely wise prerogative, which no creature can possibly know further than it is revealed. We may, therefore, conclude, that the inference for *endless misery* is fairly drawn from the nature of *sin* and the *equity* of God, without having recourse to the absurd notion of two eternal principles.

We are further told, that "another great principle upon which the restoration depends is, that Christ died for all."* But how does the supposition imply the inference? His death must be considered either as making a proper *purchase,* or as a meritorious *expedient,* denoting a *price* of redemption, on account of which God bestows favours on the unworthy. If the former, why should Christ suffer His purchased possession to lie enslaved in misery for *ages of ages,* as the Universalists allow? Does not His blood cleanse from *all sin* without the intervention of so long a period of penal torments? If the latter, why should this great expedient in the Divine economy imply a restoration to purity and happiness, any more than other displays of goodness and bounty rejected or abused? Christ having "died for all," therefore, in whatever way we understand the phrase, proves either nothing on the point in question, or proves too much. And particularly, in the sense of an expedient or valuable price paid to Divine justice,

* Ibid., p. 91.

and proclaimed to mortals as their only ground of hope, that glorious fact can no more *insure* a restoration, without the communication of Divine influence to produce a new nature, than a favour prepared and offered, but yet rejected or abused, can promote friendship.

Once more:—"Another principle upon which the universal doctrine depends is, the unchangeableness of God: whom He loves once, He always loves; He loved His creatures when He made them, as none can well deny; their sins He never loved, nor ever will: He hath declared that He loved us when sinners, but never *as* sinners. His eternal and constant hatred of all sin, and His unchangeable love to all His creatures, are of the nature of primary truths; from which the doctrine of the general restoration may be easily and plainly inferred."* On this representation it is natural to ask, If God's unchangeable love of all His creatures be not inconsistent with their punishment for *ages of ages*, how can the *unchangeableness* of Deity prevent the protraction of that punishment? If He loved them while punished for a long period, why may He not continue to love them as His creatures? "Whom He loves once, He always loves;" consequently, *love* is not incompatible with *punishment*, on the objector's own principles. "He loved His creatures when He made them; He loved us *when* sinners, but never *as* sinners;" therefore, to love any as *creatures*, though not as *sinners*, is perfectly consistent with a state of punishment. From whence it follows, that the "unchangeableness" of God contributes nothing to the doctrine of restoration.

Finally:—"Another of the first principles of the restoration is, the immutability of God's counsels, which He hath confirmed by an oath, that by two immutable things (viz., His word and oath) in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, (Heb. vi. 17, 18.)"† What a strange application and perversion of a sacred truth! "Who have fled for refuge." Is not here an evident implication, that those who have not fled for refuge are debarred from consolation? Is this a passage from which the enemies of Christ and the neglecters of His great salvation can reap consolation? Has not eternal truth declared that the final Judge will "come to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and that they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction

* Univ. Restor., p. 91. † Ibid., p. 96.

from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in them that believe, in that day?" Whom shall we credit, the apostle Paul, rather the Divine Spirit by whom he was influenced, or the Universalists? Not to insist that every part of God's testimony must be consistent with other parts, what passage is there in the New Testament, consistently interpreted, expressive of the Divine *counsel* to translate any rebels from hell to heaven? If there be no such testimony, surely "the *immutability*" of God's counsels can never be pleaded as an argument in the case.

I know it has been asserted, that "the justice of God requires . . . . that misery should not preponderate over happiness through the whole extent of individual existence, so that being should upon the whole be a curse to any of His creatures."* But such gratuitous assertions, unsupported by even plausible arguments, deserve little notice. All must allow, that to restore sinful creatures to a state of purity and happiness, is an exercise of mercy; but that God is required, in justice, to exercise mercy, involves a contradiction. And what it becomes Him to do, in the exercise of benevolence and mercy, cannot possibly be known, from the nature of the case, but by Himself, or from a revelation of His will. If creatures continue rebellious and impure, *why* should not misery "preponderate over happiness through the whole extent of individual existence?" And *why* should not their being, upon the whole, be a curse to them, while they continue in a state of hostility?

It has been again affirmed, that "the tendency of all moral evil, and of its concomitant, natural evil, is to their *own extermination*," and "since the vicious are to be raised and exposed to suffering, it is highly reasonable to believe that these sufferings will be *remedial*, and will terminate with the vices that give birth to them, so that in the end 'death will be swallowed up in victory.'"† These assertions are equally gratuitous as the others. What evidence is there for the supposition, that the tendency of evils is to their own extermination? *Why*, I ask, must the sufferings of the vicious be remedial? Not, surely, because they are raised and exposed to suffering. Nor can it be that God would cease to be infinitely just and benevolent by the continuance of their suffering. *Why* should their perpetual sufferings for perpetual crimes affect His perfections? Or in what conceivable way can evil remedy itself? That God *can* overrule and overcome evil is not

* Belsham's Elem., p. 350. † Ibid., pp. 401, 403.

disputed; but to conclude from what He can to what He will do, is not valid.*

* On the awful subject of the "*duration of future punishment*," those who have adopted the negative have generally adopted a mode of investigation that cannot be justified or allowed. Thus, for instance, Mr Winchester, [see p. 145, supra,] You have nothing to plead against "the restoration, but some threatenings of punishments which are called *everlasting* or *eternal* in our translation," (Universal Restoration, p. 16.) The Universalists consider the meaning of the scriptural terms *everlasting, eternal, for ever, for ever and ever*, and the like, to be the *sole* ground, at least the *principal*, on which is founded the *perpetuity* or endless *duration* of future suffering. But this is by no means the case. Such words only *confirm* what was before demonstrable on principles of equity. So far is the doctrine from owing its existence to them, that such terms form *no part* of its fundamental ground. The very nature of the case proves that the sufferings of a transgressor must be *endless*, except suspended by some act of mercy; therefore, our first and principal inquiries into the evidence of revealed fact have to do properly with this question. Is there any testimony in favour of the *limited* duration of punishment? On the subject in general, let the following particulars be considered:—1. The sufferings of hell are not an *arbitrary* appointment, or something *extraneous* to the real state of the sinful mind superadded to it. It rather consists in the *loss* of the chief good, and a *consciousness* of that loss; which is a never-dying worm, and unquenchable fire. 2. For a sinner to be *left* in this condition is the *natural* operation of equity; for if moral evil be not followed by natural and penal evil, an *accountable* creature may sin with *impunity*, which involves a contradiction. 3. That the *loss* of the chief good is the *due* of a transgressor, that such a loss is the *natural* effect of sin, that it is *equitable* in God to suffer such effect to take place, and that a *consciousness* of this mental change for the worse should be inseparable from the change itself, are self-evident consequences. 4. To a mind thus circumstanced, no mitigation is received from a consideration of Divine benevolence. On the contrary, the more amiable and glorious God is in Himself, the more intolerable will be a conscious contrariety to Him. Man's free nature *may* revolt *everlastingly*, and the same nature, as *depraved*, necessarily *must*, except prevented by a sovereign act. As soon may an extinguished lamp recover its flame, the eye create a light for itself, or any great law of nature be suspended, as natural evil cease to exist in a moral agent fallen from rectitude. Therefore, 5. There is no just reason to expect that the punishment or suffering itself will effect a change. The punishment is *conscious guilt*, and what prospect is there of this begetting *love, purity, light*, and *life*? Those, indeed, who suppose that the *nature* of the suffering is *arbitrary correction*, that the operation of justice resembles the labour of an executioner, that the design is to reclaim, and that either, if their system be that of the sovereignty of the will, the punished may possibly submit, or, if their system be that of philosophical necessity, these corrections will operate, as if mechanically, to produce the designed effect; such may have some colour for their conclusion. But their premises being false as to the *nature* of the sufferings, their conclusion cannot be valid. Wherefore, 6. In discussing this momentous and highly-interesting subject, the only question that remains is, *Where is the evidence that God will, by an act of mere sovereignty, put a period to what must otherwise continue, and rescue infernal prisoners from sin and woe?* If there be no positive evidence of sovereign interposition to effect a suspension of suffering, the necessary conclusion is, that it must be *perpetual*: and every term expressive of perpetuity *corroborates* that conclusion. 7. If continued sufferings be inconsistent with *justice*, there lies a *claim* on deliverance; a cessation of punishment may be pleaded as the sufferer's *due*. But this idea is too impious to be admitted. If contrary to *benevolence*, then it may be urged that the continuance of suffering for *ages of ages*, which the objectors grant, is contrary to benevolence. If not, on what principle? If it be said the punishment is proportioned to the crime, it may be replied that this gives it no superior claim, for the other side admits of *degrees* of suffering, and thereby the crime and the suffering are proportioned. If the nature of the punishment were an arbitrary infliction, and not the natural result of moral evil, with far greater propriety may it be urged, that to punish for *ages of ages* is inconsistent with benevolence, and not easily reconciled with any attribute of Deity.

CHAPTER VI.

A VIEW OF SOVEREIGNTY AS A DIVINE PREROGATIVE, AND OF ITS EXERCISE IN ADOPTING ENDS AND MEANS.

SECTION I.

Of Sovereignty as a Divine Prerogative.

A DEFINITION of sovereignty, ascertaining the sense in which I understand it, has been already given. It is now intended to enter somewhat more particularly into the subject, in order to guard against false views and illegitimate deductions, and to prove that God is actually possessed of what I term "sovereignty," as an inalienable prerogative. Some indeed have objected to the word because it is not a scriptural term; but surely this is an unreasonable prejudice, which if indulged would reduce the noblest of all sciences under a base subjection to the poverty of language. This would not be the way to prevent controversy, or to preclude discussion, for opposite parties have professed an adherence to scriptural phraseology—as Trinitarians, Arians, and Socinians. Agreement, in such cases, could be only in *words*, while the ideas annexed to them were totally different. But what are words without ideas? When words are adopted as expressive of important ideas in any discussion, much unnecessary circumlocution is prevented; and the contrary method would lead us to condemn all translations and expositions of the sacred writings.

The doctrine I would now defend is this, That God possesses an *absolute right* to will and to do whatever is not inconsistent with His fixed *purpose*, His *nature* and *perfections*, or, in one word, His EQUITY. This idea being distinctly and accurately conceived, we shall be prepared to discover some very important consequences necessarily connected with it, consequences well calculated to adjust

and settle many theological points which have been much agitated among controvertists.

At the commencement of this discussion we should recollect that an absolute right of sovereignty in God cannot be supposed to extend so far as to *counteract* a Divine purpose or decree; because this would imply a *change* of purpose unworthy of Him who is unchangeable, "whose purpose shall stand," even when He does "all His pleasure." A change of purpose would involve the idea that He had purposed imperfectly, with some defect of wisdom and foresight; or capriciously, without a plan worthy of Himself. A *purpose to change* His mode of proceeding towards different objects, by no means implies a *change of purpose.* And when any expressions or events recorded in Scripture seem capable of an interpretation which may favour the latter meaning, if we regard only the phraseology, owing to the defect of language, we should have recourse to first principles, and consider what is worthy of God's nature and character as elsewhere clearly ascertained.

It behoves us also to be on our guard, lest we should confound or identify the Divine *purposes,* in their most comprehensive import, with the mere *settled laws of nature.* For, supposing these to be suspended, controlled, any way counteracted, or even annihilated, it would by no means argue a change of purpose, but rather a purpose to change. Though some persons permit themselves to speak very slightingly, I may say with great rashness, of supposed Divine *decrees* and *purposes,* in the commonly received sense of the terms; yet few, if any, will object to a *right* in God to form *some* eternal and unchangeable decrees. And if such decrees be supposed possible in their nature, and not inconsistent with God's perfections, or universal equity, it necessarily follows that the forming of such decrees is included within the province of the supreme prerogative of sovereignty.

Let it, therefore, be distinctly understood, that the supreme prerogative, the right of sovereignty now asserted, excludes all purpose and conduct of God that is inconsistent with giving to all their *due;* for a supposed purpose of withholding from any one his just claim would be inequitable. Far be it from me to ascribe to the infinitely good and perfect Being a prerogative to violate *rectitude!* These things considered, our proposition first proposed for demonstration may be rendered a little more specific, and

more appropriate to the intended purpose of this work, thus—The sovereignty of God implies an absolute right to will and to do whatever is not inconsistent with *that equity which gives to all accountable moral agents their* DUE. The *importance* of this proposition, if true, as a principle in theology, must be evident to all who have duly attended to the subject. If God were not *essentially sovereign*, in the sense now explained, not only the Bible would be an unintelligible book, difficulties insuperable would attend all its other doctrines, and every supposed system would be full of perplexities; but there would be in my view no system of religion, or even morality, worth contending for. And yet if this doctrine be established, what becomes of the popular outcry against the Calvinistic doctrines of grace?

That sovereignty, in our sense of the term, is a prerogative essential to Deity, might appear to an impartial mind from this one general consideration, that it is a real *excellency*, an obvious and universally acknowledged excellency, in all rational beings, to possess and exercise a prerogative similar in kind, according to the degree in which it prevails. Therefore, as this, no less than every other "good and perfect gift," proceeds from God, He must possess it in an infinite degree. But more particularly—

I. The absolute right of the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth to the exercise of such a prerogative towards moral agents, may be argued from the *self-existence* and *independence* of His nature. How necessarily do these perfections of God imply that He is above control, with respect to His creatures! Who in earth or heaven has a right to say, in the language of remonstrance, "What doest thou?" If this prerogative be necessarily implied in absolute independence, neither the existence nor the non-existence of beings who are the production of His power and wise pleasure can possibly affect its exercise. It cannot be supposed that He would, or indeed possibly could, *alienate* from Himself what is an essential excellency of His self-existent and independent nature. Whatever prerogatives He has conferred on men or angels, we are certain that they are *dependent* on Him, and that He is *independent* of them. The facts are correlative, and the evidence of both is equal.

Were every human being and all existing worlds instantly annihilated, the exercise of this Divine prerogative could not be affected by the event. God would still possess the right of giving

existence to other beings and worlds,—a right incapable of control or diminution. And is it not equally evident that this right extends to the good *mode* and *condition* of all created existence? What but this can account for the amazing *variety* of creatures, and for the *degrees* in the scale of being and of excellence among them? And, in confirmation of this right, we may further ask, Can there be any ground of remonstrance conceivable to be rationally urged by any one, in all this astonishing assemblage of beings, however dishonourable and mean in comparison of others, as far as the Divine appointment is concerned?

II. The right of exercising this prerogative towards all accountable moral agents may be argued from the *all-sufficiency* of God and His absolute *liberty*, or freedom to choose out of all possibles, whatever might most effectually manifest the glory of His nature and perfections, while nothing is withheld from them that is their due. Those, indeed, who plead for a *self-determining power* in man, suppose that this is a sufficient bar in the way of that exercise of sovereignty which is here maintained; but they seem not to be aware, that the very *principle* for which they contend, the high prerogative of FREE-WILL as the ultimate source of all determinations, effectually subverts itself when applied to man, and the whole system erected upon it. For there cannot be *two supreme wills*, any more than there can be two self-existences, independences, or all-sufficiencies. Therefore, as they allow that *free-will* is essential to Deity, the question is resolved to this, Which of these wills is *supreme?* Can there be any just ground of hesitation? What is there in Scripture, in experience, or in the nature of things, that can induce us to suppose the free-will of God to be *dependent* in its determinations on the free-will of man or of any creature?

The truth is, that even the *free-will* of God is not a *self-determining* power, but is itself determined by His holy, blessed, perfect nature,—in a word, His ALL-SUFFICIENCY. And every created will, however free, is determined by the nature, or the degree of sufficiency or insufficiency in the free agent. For every will is the medium or instrument of power, and all power is necessarily proportionate to the degree of sufficiency or insufficiency in the agent by whom the power is exerted and the will employed. Now, as the source of the Divine free-will is all-sufficient, and that of human free-will inferior and subordinate, it clearly follows that the right

of sovereignty includes a supreme control over that source of insufficiency by which the human agent is determined. Thus we see that God has an absolute right to influence and control, in an *indirect* way, the most uncontrollable thing in man—his free-will. I said, in an "indirect" way; because the *direct* influence and control are on the heart or *nature,* and not on the *will* of the agent.

The reader will perceive, and let him always keep in mind, that the Divine prerogative here asserted is that of a benefactor. Some, indeed, have most unwarrantably inferred, that it must extend to the *appointment* of defectibility, or a *decree* of the *cause* of a defective choice; but they did not sufficiently advert to that which actually determines free-will, either in God or in man. They have justly argued that there cannot be two supreme wills, and that the free-will of man cannot be a supreme, self-determining power; but they falsely concluded that the will of God is possessed of that character. They also did not duly consider the *true cause* of defectibility and insufficiency, which is, demonstrably, a *negative principle* related to every created nature, as a *contrast* to absolute being and perfections, but imagined it to be a positive principle, created with our being. And thus they have ascribed to the *will* of God every degree of limitation, insufficiency, and defectibility, in man and every other creature, instead of regarding them as *consequences,* independent of all will, resulting from the *absolute nature* of God, which necessarily excludes every other unlimited, self-sufficient, and indefectible nature. Nor could they properly reflect upon the absurd and ruinous consequences that necessarily result from the principle they adopted. For instance, on their assumption, all *defects,* and consequently the sinfulness of all free actions, must be ascribed to the sovereign will of God, as well as all excellences. And thus contrary effects must be assigned to the same cause! Good and evil must have one and the same origin! Besides, by ascribing all defective principles to the supreme will, as the objects of sovereignty, we ascribe to God what is needless, and what is infinitely unworthy of Him. *Needless;* because the defective principles of limitation, dependence, insufficiency, mutability, and the like, are *essentially related* to every possible being, except the First, who is absolute, uncaused, and infinite, without any supposition of appointment, decree, or will in the case; for no voluntary intervention could make it otherwise. It is also infinitely *unworthy*

of God, that He should be the voluntary producer of defective principles. Does not the supposition imply, most impiously, that God is possessed of such principles Himself? else how could they possibly proceed from Him by decree, will, or any other conceivable mode?

III. In proof of the general thesis, the absolute right of God to exercise towards moral agents the sovereignty or prerogative defined, we next appeal to *the essential imperfection of all creatures.* As there can be but one absolutely perfect Being, it necessarily follows that all other beings must be essentially imperfect in comparison of Him. But this imperfection, whether we call it limitation, insufficiency, or by any other name, implies that essential perfection should have an absolute right to dispose of the subject to whom it relates in any possible way consistent with equity. Among the imperfections essential to accountable free agents, that of *defectibility* is the most awfully interesting. Nothing is more characteristic of the difference between the Creator and His intelligent creatures, than absolute sufficiency and indefectibility in Him, and in them the reverse. What, then, can be more evident, or more necessary for their welfare, than the right in God to control, to influence, to direct, or to preserve, according to His absolute but wise pleasure, the subjects of His holy government? How preposterous, how contradictory the supposition, that God could bestow capacities and powers over which He had no right of control, and the abuses of which He could not rectify? Had the adorable Creator a right to make man upright? How unreasonable, then, is the thought, that by so doing He has alienated His right of sovereign prerogative to provide, from foresight and purpose, a remedy for him as apostatised! Does He not still retain His liberty of having "mercy on whom He will have mercy," and of being "gracious to whom He will be gracious?"

IV. The sovereignty here maintained is implied in *Divine wisdom.* Wisdom supposes, as notions essential to it, foresight, contrivance, and provision; therefore, infinite wisdom must exclude all chance, or absolute contingence, and settle everything in such a manner, and to such an infallible degree, as never to be surprised by anything new, unknown, or unexpected. This clearly implies an absolute right to exclude all chance, and also to will and to do whatever is not inequitable. But is it inequitable to counteract defects, and confer benefits, according to infallible

wisdom? Surely wisdom belongs unto God, and known unto Him are all His works of nature and grace, in every degree, and to the latest period. To *effect all good*, and to *prevent much evil*, are sovereign acts; and not one of these can be imagined, with any degree of plausibility, to be unjust. But not anything advanced in this argument, or in this work, implies that *moral evil* is an object of sovereign *causation;* for this would involve a violation of equity towards the creature, and an impeachment of universal justice, which every principle and argument employed tend to obviate. Divine equity, indeed, like the law, affords an innocent *occasion* for moral evil to shew itself; but sovereign wisdom has contrived, and gracious power effects, the *prevention* of its universal spread through the intelligent creation. And not only is much moral evil not permitted to take place, but Divine wisdom, in instances innumerable, takes *occasion* from moral evil not hindered to exercise sovereign mercy.

V. The sovereign prerogative here defended is implied in the *chief end* for which all created existences must have been made. That God "made *all things* for Himself," that is, to represent His own glorious perfections and excellences, is at once the language of Sacred Scripture, and the verdict of sound philosophy.* But if so, is it conceivable that He should not possess and exercise an absolute sovereignty over all persons and things? If moral agents in our world, possessed of freedom, means of happiness, and capacities for glorifying God and enjoying Him for ever, "despise the riches of His goodness and forbearance," and precipitate themselves into sin and rebellion, guilt and ruin, who can reasonably entertain the thought that God has not an absolute prerogative of sovereignty to be merciful and gracious to whom He will, in a way devised by infinite wisdom? After the evidence now produced, I hope it is unnecessary to enlarge, and trust it may be said without arrogance, that the original proposition is fairly demonstrated—viz., That God has an absolute right to will and to do whatever is not inconsistent with equity, that equity which gives to all accountable moral agents their DUE.

I am not aware of any objections that may be urged against the preceding arguments with any plausibility. It remains, therefore, to notice the obvious *consequences* which naturally flow

* See President Edwards's Dissertation concerning the End for which God Created the World, *passim*.

from the proofs given. It follows, first, that God had an absolute right to *predestinate* whom He pleased of His rational creatures to grace and obedience, faith and good works, happiness and glory. Secondly, that God had an absolute right to *redeem* some of the human race from sin and misery with a sovereign *speciality*. Thirdly, that God has an absolute right to confer *special favours* upon, and to infuse gracious principles into, whom He pleases. Fourthly, that God has an absolute right to *determine the will* of a free agent by His gracious influence on the heart, whence all virtuous determinations take their immediate rise. Finally, that God has an absolute right to cause all those who are saints to *persevere* in a state of grace and obedience unto everlasting salvation. Every one of these consequences, I conceive, follows inevitably from the doctrine before proved; nor does there appear any implication of what is inequitable, in the smallest degree, but much that is kind, benevolent, and merciful. By rejecting this doctrine we admit glaring contradictions and endless confusion; by allowing it, we introduce consistency and order, and possess a rational ground of faith and hope, and a sublime and edifying view of the Divine character.

Section II.

Of the Exercise of Divine Sovereignty as related to a System of Ends and Means.

It is the character of intelligent beings to act with design, and it is the province of wisdom to seek the best ends by the most laudable means. An intelligent agent without design, and a wise agent without a system of ends and means, are incompatible ideas. *System* admits of indefinite degrees of amplitude and combination. There is not a mechanic of the humblest order who does not act upon system; and the excellence or defect of his work must be estimated by the worthiness of his design and the completeness of the execution. When we rise to higher schemes, as to the sublimer parts of mechanism or architecture, painting or poetry, marks of design, regular dependence, and suitable subordination pervading the whole complexure, we are struck with admiration. We admire the effect, but still more the skill of the artist who has exercised so much penetrating foresight and wise contrivance. What shall we then say, and how should we feel, when we contemplate the mechanism and system of the universe! How amazing the knowledge, the wisdom, the skill, and the goodness of its Author! How sublime the design, and how wonderful the arrangement! "O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens. . . . . When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" How exquisite is the system itself, and how astonishing are those laws, rules, or methodical energies, by which the whole and every part are sustained and directed! "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches."

From schemes of art and the physical system of the universe, let us turn to plans of government. Here also we find many gradations, from a small family or a school to the largest kingdoms or empires. The larger the circle, the greater need of wisdom to contrive plans, and to direct power. Power without wisdom is

ever liable to become tyrannical, and wisdom without power is inefficient. Of human governments, that must be the most perfect in which the welfare of the whole is best promoted with fewest disadvantages to individuals. But human laws, as well as the Divine, result from constituted relations; and the excellency of any government must be estimated by the wise adaptation of remedies to evils, including the characters, dispositions, habits, and innumerable circumstances of the subjects. A perfection of government, under whatever form, abstracted from the dispositions and characters of men, together with local, temporary, and other circumstances, is a chimera formed in the fancies of shallow minds. However, the larger and more complicated the system, the greater necessity is there for wisdom and address; and often the abilities of numerous individuals are not adequate to guard against anarchy, convulsions, revolutions, and ruin.

What wisdom, and skill, and power, are therefore needful for the government of all intelligent creatures in all worlds! Jehovah is the *universal* monarch; His is "the kingdom, the power, and the glory." "By Him kings reign, and princes decree justice." If Solomon's wisdom (which was first pure, and then peaceable) "excelled the wisdom of Egypt," we are reminded that God "gave Solomon wisdom." "His understanding is infinite," and "there is no wisdom against the Lord." "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: and he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him." Well might the inhabitants of heaven exclaim with a great voice, "Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments." Well might they "fall down and worship God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen, Alleluia. Praise ye our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great." And, finally, well might there be "heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

As the testimony of Scripture and the piety of heaven delight to ascribe unto God the glory due to His name, so do true

philosophy and impartial reason. Every system, whether natural, civil, or moral, implies an *ultimate end*, and *means* of attaining it. We shall, therefore, consider the moral system in reference to these two fundamental and comprehensive ideas; beginning, as is most natural, with the former. As God is infinitely wise, and as it is the discriminative character of wisdom to act with design, so infinite wisdom proposes the *best end* to be accomplished in the *best manner*. If, therefore, Divine moral government be conducted with wisdom, as undoubtedly it is, it must refer to some *ultimate end* worthy of that wisdom.

Prior to decretive choice, everything stood in the Divine all-sufficiency, and in the rank of *mere possibles*. The adoption, then, of one system in preference to all others, must be excellent in proportion to the wisdom of the designing cause. Not that any *effect* can be *infinite*, as the cause is; for that would imply a contradiction—one infinite producing another. A system *infinitely* great or good is an *impossibility*,—a supposition as impossible as that God should cease to be infinite. Not only the aggregate of all existing worlds, but also of all *possible* worlds, compared with *absolute infinity*, are as nothing. And this impossibility of any effect being positively infinite, is the highest glory of the ever-adorable Uncaused Being, whose name is Jehovah. If at any time the word "infinite" be used in reference to the works of God, it must be understood as relating to our limited comprehension.

Though in the amazing plan of creation and providence there are *imperia in imperio*, or, in the language of Ezekiel, "as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel;" yet, it is reasonable to suppose that all the parts, however numerous and complicated to our view, compose one grand whole. If *all things*, in the natural, civil, and moral world, "*work together for good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose," how reasonable is the conclusion, that all things, in all worlds, *co-operate* to promote one grand *ultimate end* designed by unerring wisdom! We now contemplate the moral system as we find it actually displayed, and argue concerning it on the principles of reason; that is to say, principles which approve themselves to right reason, without dependence on mere *testimony*, though suggested by Divine revelation. Infinite wisdom implies infallible *prescience;* and the following description must approve itself to

every reasonable being as expressive of the character of the first designing Cause:—"I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the *end* from the *beginning*, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

Admitting, as we must, the Divine prescience, the *result* of free agency must have been *known* before any creatures exercised their free-will. And yet, with perfect prescience of events, in every instance, He gave those beings and capacities without which neither the use nor abuse of liberty could have taken place. The defection of man was clearly seen, if created and circumstanced in a given manner, and yet he *was* created. And all the crimes of the human race were distinctly foreseen, on supposition of existing circumstances; nevertheless it is the plan of Providence that they *have* existence, and it is a fact that they transgress righteous and holy laws. Yet it is a demonstrable truth, that neither the defection and crimes, nor their cause, originate in Him who is goodness and purity. From these considerations it must follow, however paradoxical it may appear at first view, that man is *at once*, but in different respects, the subject of *liberty* and *necessity*, as sure as the exercise of *justice* and *mercy* was to take place in God's plan of moral government. If man be not *free* to evil, he is not a moral subject; and if he be not *necessitated* to good, he cannot be under the influence of sovereign wisdom and mercy. As liberty is essential to government, so necessity is essential to wisdom. If man be not free, he is not accountable; and if the foreseen result of abused freedom, in apostasy, guilt, depravity, and moral impotence, be not provided for by a necessitating plan of gracious influence, no one of the fallen race can be saved.

Divine infallible prescience viewed things and events as they actually *would* be, and not dubiously as they possibly *might* be. There must, therefore, be in the nature of things a ground—a certain ground, as contradistinguished from all uncertainty—of the foreseen event. An infallible prescience of any event which has no ground of certainty in the nature of things, involves contradictory ideas; implying that an event might be and might not be, without any ground of difference; or, that certainty and uncertainty, contrary things, are identified. It has been asserted, and on the surest ground, that the foreseen certainty of defects and crimes cannot be ascribed to the Divine decree; what then is the ground of

certainty? The true answer is, A negative principle of defectibility as inseparably and essentially related to all created existence. This, and this alone, can solve the problem, in connexion with a positive and necessitating causation of good. This excludes all chance and uncertainty, while God is infinitely remote from being the *cause* of moral evil.

The apostasy and ruin of men being foreseen in an adequate certain cause, the next inquiry is, Might they not recover themselves without a necessitating sovereignty? We may safely assert, the supposition is impossible in the nature of things. For, in reference to a moral system, there is no conceivable medium between equity and sovereignty, and their respective operations. What is not an effect of the former, must be an effect of the latter. Now, is it conceivable that mere equity, without the intervention of sovereignty, should both condemn and acquit, punish and release a guilty and rebellious subject? or that the subject by some exertion of his own may rise to perfect innocence and obedience? If, left to his freedom when in a state of perfection, he fell, where is there a ground, a principle, a possibility, in the nature of things, of his recovery to his primitive condition, without a sovereign interposition and assistance? If his capacity, his freedom, and the most engaging means, were not adequate to *preserve* him in a state of *active goodness*, or did not so in fact, what basis of hope is left, according to the operations of justice, that he will *recover* himself from guilt, disorder, and misery?

It may be here observed, if all the operations of God relative to a moral system must proceed either from equity or sovereignty, and if the operations of the latter be only those of beneficence, as before explained and proved; it follows, that the former alone has operation in reference to the defection and crimes of moral subjects, as well as in their punishment. Was any *sin*, or any proper *cause* of sin, in man or angel, from *sovereign* will, appointment, or causation? Impossible. We might as well ask, Is darkness from the light, enmity from love, folly from wisdom, or weakness from power? Was it, then, from *equity*, as an *impelling cause*, or as any proper *cause*, that apostasy entered into the moral system, and crimes are continued from age to age? Equally impossible. For this would involve the absurd consequences, that equity and injustice are the same, and that sin, rebellion, and anarchy are good things. We are then argumentatively constrained

to conclude, that the *cause* of defection in the moral system is not in or from the Supreme Governor, but in the *subject*. But has the subject any principle, source, or cause, which he has not *received* from his Creator? Most assuredly he *has*, as sure as he is the subject of limitation, defectibility, a want of independence and all-sufficiency, or any other negative relation. The proper *cause* of defection, and every sin in the universe, is a *negative principle* essentially *related* to the subject of moral government, and related indeed to every creature that exists, or possibly can exist. And it is the glory of God, His eternal dignity and pre-eminence, that no being but Himself *can* be destitute of this negative principle.

This is the ultimate source of failure in a moral system, of which that equity which gives every one his *due* is only the innocent *occasion;* and it is the prerogative of sovereign grace and mercy, from the ruin thus introduced by man, to erect a monument, to build an everlasting temple, on which may be inscribed GLORY TO GOD and SALVATION TO MEN: God, the infinitely wise, merciful, and powerful Architect; and men, the living and ornamented materials. To these it may be said, "Ye are God's building, ... an habitation of God through the Spirit." And of them it may be asserted, in a sense truly sublime and wonderful, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." Here "*grace* reigns through *righteousness* unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Here *mercy* and *truth* are met together, *righteousness* and *peace* have kissed each other.

Thus the exercise of Divine equity afforded the *occasion* of failure in the moral system,—an occasion, however, absolutely innocent; and the criminal failure, however detestable and ruinous in itself, gave *occasion* to the exercise of sovereign mercy. By the exercise of the former, the subject was merely suffered to fall, because to *hinder* the event was not *due* to him, otherwise he could not possibly have fallen; and without the exercise of the latter, it is equally impossible that he should rise to spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. Hence the contrivance of profound wisdom in adopting an ULTIMATE END, to which everything in the system, however contingent in human estimation, should be infallibly subservient. This end is the GLORY OF GOD, His justice and mercy, in the salvation of His chosen through a Mediator. And hence the MEANS, by which these and all Divine perfections are displayed to the highest advantage, in the plan and

economy of redemption. The scheme is truly wonderful, when we contemplate it as a system of possibility, or of consistency in the nature of things; but our admiration is increased when we contemplate its efficiency in the actual salvation of sinful creatures. When we reflect upon the number saved, millions of mankind, both small and great, "standing before the throne," having been "redeemed from among men" who were exposed to endless misery, are we not "lost in wonder, love, and praise?" "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

If we put the question, *Why was man* PERMITTED *to fall?* the answer is, Because it was *good*, and must *appear* to be good, *worthy* of the Supreme Majesty, to *shew* His independence, all-sufficiency, and indefectibility, as well as His benevolence, to the intelligent universe. And how is it conceivable that this should be done, but by giving to each his *due* in the exercise of equity? And how can this be conceived of as possible, but by *permitting some* intelligent beings to *manifest* their true character of limitation, their absolute dependence on Divine favour, their comparative insufficiency to preserve themselves, and that they stood essentially related to a cause of defectibility? If they were not *liable* to fall from righteousness and holiness, they would not be *free*, they would not be *creatures;* and if not *permitted* to fall, how could it be *manifested* to the intelligent universe what God is, and what they are, as to their essential characters, as Creator and creatures, as Governor and governed? Can any fertility of fancy, or any force of genius, imagine any other mode of *manifesting* the awful difference between indefectible and defectible beings, besides that of the former permitting the latter, in equity, to develop their essential characters?

Besides, supposing no *actual* failure had been permitted to take place in the moral system to the present moment, still the *liability* of it would *always* remain, if the Moral Governor sovereignly prevented not, by affording to free agents more than their due claim. The question would still return, Is it good, is it worthy, that there should be a manifestation of the essential characters of the parties related at *any* period, or is it not? Is not the negative of this

question contrary to justice and reason? What *justice* is there in the demand, that a defectible being should *not be permitted* to develop the reality of his essential character? And what *reason* is there in requiring that God should not shew Himself to be *equitable* in giving to all their due, His own character included? But without leaving some free agents to themselves, as a matter of public notoriety, who can conceive it possible for Him to shew Himself to be thus equitable to Himself and others? If any pretend that God, who had it in His power, was bound in justice to prevent sin, let them beware of "charging God foolishly;" for He did not prevent it. And independently of the fact, they absurdly identify *justice* and *favour*, denoting that the Moral Governor cannot be *just* except He be *favourable* to His subjects beyond their due!

On the other hand, if the question be put, *Why are any* REDEEMED *from sin and misery?* we answer, first, Because it was *good*, and eminently *worthy* of infinite benevolence, to display Divine *mercy* under the direction, or according to the dictates of unerring wisdom. But is it conceivable that mercy can be displayed without a plan of redemption? Indeed, *grace* may be manifested in the *preservation* of holy and righteous beings; and they have no ground of preservation except in sovereign favour: for the most exalted and blessed in the rectoral system, if they had not more than their due, would soon manifest their defectibility. But the proper object of mercy is a creature in misery; and that of *recovery* from a state of sin, with which misery or suffering is connected, is *redemption*, which necessarily implies a plan of mercy. We answer, secondly, It was *good*, and an eminent display of goodness, to promote the happiness of a ruined creature, according to a sovereign but indisputably wise prerogative. But how could this be, without a plan of redemption, by which justice and mercy might co-operate, and mutually illustrate each other? In vain do we look for a solution of the difficulty to the sinner himself, and in vain do we expect relief from equity alone; but mercy, wise and sovereign mercy, solves the problem, and unties the knot. By the intervention of mercy, exercised in the scheme of redemption, as revealed in the gospel, the Divine perfections are made to harmonise in raising sinners from guilt to righteousness, from sin to holiness, and from earth to heaven. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!"

From what has been advanced, it appears, that the glorious disclosure of redeeming grace is a *higher end* than the display of *equity;* the latter being a subordinate means of the former. Equity might have been displayed without mercy, as in the case of the fallen angels; but mercy could not have been displayed without the previous exercise of equity. We may then conclude, that the *ultimate end* of Divine sovereignty with regard to the moral system of mankind is, THE GLORY OF REDEEMING GRACE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, in the salvation of God's chosen. To this glorious end everything in the moral system seems harmoniously to co-operate—the substitution of the Saviour, the selection of a people, Divine revelation, the preaching of the gospel, ordinances of worship, and the influences of the Spirit. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ:* according as he hath chosen us *in him* before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children *by Jesus Christ* to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, *to the praise of the glory of his grace,* wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have *redemption through his blood,* the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace: wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; that we should be *to the praise of his glory.*"* This is not the language of human rhetoric, but of Divine inspiration, which disdains to be directed by the fastidious rules of mortals.

The attentive reader will observe, that our inquiry hitherto has not been, What is the *chief end* of God in forming the great system of the universe, or even in the plan of redeeming grace? This, I conceive, is not an object of *sovereignty,* which always implies free pleasure, a *choice,* and an *alternative;* and in its exercise a preference is given to one thing, or one conduct, rather

* Eph. i. 3–12.

than another, by the decision of infallible wisdom. The reasons why I conclude that God's *chief end* is not an object of sovereign choice are the following:—First, because equity requires that the highest value should be set on the greatest worth. God is possessed of infinite worth, and therefore equity (as contra-distinguished from sovereign pleasure) must *necessarily require* that He should set the highest value on HIMSELF. But to set the highest value on any object to which a plan or system is subservient, is to regard it as the chief end. Consequently, God's *chief end* is HIMSELF; and to suppose any other object *capable* of this distinction, is incompatible with universal equity and infinite rectitude. Secondly, seeing God *himself* is His chief end, that end cannot be the effect of sovereignty, or be aimed at as an object of discretionary pleasure, any more than the Divine existence can be an effect of it. But the Divine existence is not an *effect* of any kind; it is absolutely eternal, independent, and uncaused. Consequently, God's chief end is not an object of discretionary choice, as if an alternative were possible, but of absolute necessity. And this arises, not from any limitation of wisdom, power, or freedom, but from the unrivalled excellency and glory of His nature.

These considerations, I presume, clearly establish an important distinction between an *ultimate* and a *chief* end. A few additional remarks, however, may be thought expedient. First, every chief is also an ultimate end, but every ultimate is not a chief end. What God *ultimately* aimed at in the human system of moral government, as before proved, was "the praise of redeeming grace;"* and what He *chiefly* aimed at was *Himself*, in the displays of His equity, and especially of His mercy. What is *chief*, in reference to the Divine conduct, is determined by *rectitude*, or universal equity; but what is not the chief, though an *ultimate* end, is determined by *wisdom*, which is no less diversified in its exercise, than are the possible plans in all-sufficiency. Secondly, God's will, in reference to His chief end, allowing no alternative, can admit of only approbation or acquiescence. For in this way alone can He exercise His will respecting His existence and rectitude, His unrivalled supremacy and inalienable glory.

From the preceding discussion we may collect in what manner,

* Isa. lx. 21, lxi. 3; Jer. xiii. 11; 2 Thess. i. 10-12; Phil. i. 10, 11; 1 Pet. iv. 11; 1 Cor. vi. 20, x. 30.

and in what instances principally, the Divine prerogative of *sovereignty* was exercised in appointing the *ultimate end* of our moral system—the praise of glorious grace in the salvation of the mystical body of Christ. First, the ultimate end *might* have been a display of creating and preserving goodness, in the continued happiness of the whole system, if we regard the mere *possibility* of the case, abstracted from the considerations of wisdom, equity, and mercy. But sovereignty, infinitely wise and good, determined to manifest the Divine perfections of equity and mercy, rather than mere supporting grace: the one perfection, by *permitting* man to fall; the other, by *raising* many when fallen, and crowning them with permanent glory, Secondly, the ultimate end *might* have been a display of mere equity in the total and final ruin of the system; that is, the case was not only possible, but perfectly *equitable*, if we regard the objects themselves, and exclude the consideration of wisdom, grace, and mercy. But by a sovereign plan of recovering grace, there is "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men." God has a tribute of eternal praise for His undeserved mercy, from fallen but redeemed sinners, while these have an everlasting portion of uninterrupted happiness. Thirdly, the ultimate end *might* have been greatly different in respect of the *numbers*, and the identical *persons* who will be eventually saved. For no one had a claim in equity that he should be qualified for, and introduced to heavenly enjoyments. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost." "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

If the inquiry be further made, Why are *these* and not *others* "endowed with so great a benefit?" why is *this* number and not a *greater* made meet to inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world? no answer can be given, but that *sovereign pleasure*, under the influence of infallible wisdom, though to us unfathomable, has ordered all things well. "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Sovereignty says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." The plan was *wisely* formed; if some are more favoured than others, none are

injured. Well may we exclaim on the brink of this ocean, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

It was observed at the beginning of the present discussion that every system may be considered under the twofold notion of *end* and *means*. We have already considered the moral system in reference to an ULTIMATE END, and the exercise of sovereignty in the choice of it; let us now proceed to consider the same sublime prerogative with regard to the MEANS adopted for accomplishing that end. We are apparently assured by the highest authority, and arguments have been adduced to prove that we do not mistake its meaning, that the ultimate end to which the whole system is destined and directed to move is, "The glory of redeeming grace through Jesus Christ, in the salvation of chosen sinners." But by what *means* is this to be effected? Redemption and salvation imply a *fallen state*, and such undoubtedly is the actual state of all mankind. "All are gone out of the way," (*i.e.*, the way of holiness and righteousness, truth and rectitude.) "All the world is become guilty before God." But a provision of *means* of recovery, by a concerted method, before offenders had existence, implied a *certainty* of their future fall into a lost condition. If the event was *uncertain*, where would be the wisdom or the need of a redeeming plan prior to the event? And if the agent was free from compulsion and restraint,—especially if made "upright," or "created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness,"—how was his fall so infallibly *certain* as to afford a sufficient ground for the antecedent appointment of a plan of redemption, the ultimate *end* of which must have been fixed prior to the *means* of its accomplishment? Is it conceivable that certainty can be founded on uncertainty? Here, then, is a Divine *prescience* without a Divine *causation* of the event: the former is necessary for the *formation* of a system of end and means, which is accomplished by a progressive series of events; the latter can no more take place than infinite holiness can oppose itself. In short, if the fall and crimes of men were not foreseen as *certain*, there could have been no ultimate end such as we have proved to exist, or means adopted

to attain it. If sovereignty be supposed to appoint, or any way to *cause* the introduction of sin, or the criminality of actions, rectitude would be no rectitude, and sin would be no sin; the folly of scepticism and the madness of atheism would find an excuse at least in theory, though the sting of a guilty conscience would still remain.—Taking these considerations into the account, we conclude, according to the strictest rules of ratiocination, and in perfect harmony with revealed truth—

I. That God resolved, for a time, as one instance of sovereignty in the use of means, to conduct Himself towards our moral system in *strict equity*, whereby an innocent *occasion* would be given for the *cause* of defectibility to shew itself, and for sovereign mercy to be exercised in redemption and salvation. This is the great point, and to which all other difficulties on the subject are reducible—viz., Was anything more, on the part of God, requisite to be done in order to foresee the defection of men as infallibly *certain*, besides conducting Himself in *strict equity* towards them in their free agency? And it is replied, on the firmest ground, that nothing more was necessary, in addition to the support of their being, capacities, and moral means, all which in themselves are good things, the effects of His bounty and favour. Can anything be more evident, on the one hand, than that the *cause* of defectibility, and of defection, is in the free agent himself, as what is essentially related to a created nature; and, on the other hand, that the goodness, the holy and virtuous character of every free act is from Divine sovereign bounty, as contradistinguished from equity? Are not these positions capable of the strictest demonstration? How, then, can the consequence be avoided, that a human action which is destitute of goodness, holiness, and virtue, has its *cause* in the agent himself, in such a manner as to be neither in nor from God; and that God only affords *occasion* for that cause to shew itself, by *not giving* (a mere *negative* consideration) to the agent what he had *no right* to expect, or could not *equitably* claim?

The supposition that God was *bound* to preserve a free agent from sinning, or not to create him at all, is full of atheistic absurdities. It not only accuses the Divine Being of having actually *done* what He *ought not* to have done, or of having *not done* what it *became* Him to do,—whereby the objector sets up his own wisdom and judgment in opposition to those of the Supreme

Intelligence,—but it requires also one of these absurd conditions: first, that God ought not to *do good* by creating intelligent, accountable agents, because it would prove an *occasion*, however innocent, of moral evil. On this principle, He ought not to enact a holy law, because He foreknew that a free agent would transgress it. "Where there is no law, there is no transgression." But how absurd to require a cessation from doing good—and the enacting of a holy law is doing good—because it may be the occasion of evil! Does this accord with any right principle, any conceivable rule of propriety, that a good act, law, or conduct, should be avoided, because it *may* or *will* be abused? Another condition equally absurd, required in the objection, is, that if a free agent be created at all, he ought either to be made indefectible, or his principle of defectibility ought to be counteracted by the gift not only of natural ability, but also the *benè velle* itself. The former is absolutely impossible in the nature of things, that is, the nature of God and of a creature; and the latter implies that God *ought not* to be *strictly just* either to Himself or to His creatures, lest this should afford *occasion* to any creature of becoming not strictly conformable to rectitude. In short, it implies that it is *inequitable* in God not to be so *favourable* as to *prevent* sin. What a contradiction both in terms and in ideas!

Can it be anything less than secret atheism in the human heart that can require such absurd conditions? To harbour such an objection, is not only unreasonable and unprofitable, but impious and ruinous. Who under its influence can value the gospel, as exhibiting a remedy against an evil which God *ought* to have prevented? Who, thus minded, can love a law that condemns his crimes, and for the perfect observance of which he is not qualified? What beauty or glory, or even what equity, can such a jaundiced and envious eye behold in a plan of moral government or a system of recovering grace? Nay, how can such an objector, while under the influence of this prejudice, exercise any devout or virtuous affection towards that Supreme Being who has not prevented sin, which it was in His power to prevent, and which the objection absurdly supposes He *ought* to have prevented? Let the unreasonable, the ungrateful, the rebellious mind, tormented with gloomy suspicions, that *will not submit* by faith and love, humility and adoration, gratitude and cheerful obedience, to the equity of God in *permitting* sin, and to His sovereignty in *salvation* from

it, read his character and his doom in these words:—"Then he who had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury [or, interest.] Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him who hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath [*i.e.*, improves by cheerful diligence] shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not [*i.e.*, improves not by cheerful diligence] shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." *

Is it not equitable that a proud and murmuring spirit, that disdains to submit to the equity and sovereignty of God in their actual exercise,—that opposes the law of the gospel, the government and grace, the character, the perfection and prerogative of Jehovah,—should be *left* to himself? Does he not *deserve* the awful sentence, "Let him alone?" What *right* have such proud complainers to hope that they shall not "stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken"? † Let them go to the haughty, but afterward humbled monarch of the East, to learn a lesson of submission and better views of the Divine Majesty:—"And at the end of days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? . . . . Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those who walk in pride he is able to abase." ‡

* Matt. xxv. 24-30. † Isa. viii. 15; also xxviii. 13.
‡ Dan. iv. 34-37.

II. Another instance of sovereignty in the choice of *means*, in subserviency to the ultimate end established, is the appointment of a *Mediator*. Mankind having deviated from rectitude, their *equitable doom* was the suffering of penal evil proportionate to their defection. The difficulty in the way of pardon and restoration to righteousness, to holiness and fellowship with God, lay in the *honourable suspension* of the penal consequence. Wisdom fixed on a *mediatorial* plan. By this method, due regard was paid to law and justice, and their glory was effectually secured. Hereby God would declare His righteousness, that He would be just, while the justifier of apostate creatures. If consistently with the rules of moral government any sinner may be interested in a meritorious Mediator, constituted one in law with him as a Surety, made to partake of a spiritual life, and to submit to terms of reconciliation, the difficulty is removed.

Some have ungratefully urged, under pretence of exalting the Divine benevolence, that a meritorious substitute was unnecessary. How unscriptural, how unreasonable, the supposition! The advocates of this hypothesis, which represents the inutility of a mediatorial scheme for the purpose of displaying the love of God, must have low notions of the evil of sin as to its nature and demerit,—of the "terrors of the Lord" by which men are persuaded to be reconciled to Him,—of the sanctions of His moral government,—and finally of the nature of forgiveness and benevolence. What is *sin* but opposition to Divine holiness? Is this a trifling punctilio? What is the just *demerit* of sin but the displeasure of Him who is opposed by it? While this is the case, "though hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished." "How should a man be just with [or, before] God? If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?"* What is law, what is moral government, without penal *sanctions?* If these may be dispensed with, irrespectively of any compensation to the honour, the dignity, and the justice of law and government, what meaning can there be in threats, or danger from non-compliance? If it be said that pardon is promised on repentance, I ask, what rational prospect is there of any sinner truly repenting without sovereign grace communicated through a mediatorial channel? And if there

* Job ix. 2–4.

be no prospect of the condition being fulfilled by the sinner without sovereign aid, what hope is there left for him? To say that Divine assistance may be afforded to a rebel without any reference to the honour of law and government, is to beg the question, and absurdly to convert the most significant sanctions into unmeaning ciphers.

For the sake of argument, let it be supposed that a rebel may be pardoned without a meritorious ransom or a mediator. Will this alone make him happy? Will benevolence render the impure in heart a fit subject for celestial enjoyments? Impossible. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." "For our God is a consuming fire." It is not a doubtful assertion, that pardon and purity, justification and spiritual renovation, go inseparably together. These, with all other spiritual blessings, are derived as the effect of being in Christ, as St Paul states:—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." And from Him at the same time is "the Spirit of life," which makes the pardoned subject free from the power of sin. Except a person be thus influenced to "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," to rise from a sensual to a spiritual temper and conduct, a free pardon cannot be supposed to effect his happiness. And how is any sinner to possess this without union to Christ? "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. . . . . He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." *

The mediation of Christ is so far from degrading the Divine benevolence that nothing can be conceived more expressive of it. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." † How expressive are the following words of the beloved disciple in proof of our assertion:—"In this was manifested

* John xv. 4–6. † Eph. ii. 4–7.

the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." * This love includes benevolence to the law, which is magnified and made honourable; to righteousness, which is here declared; and to every Divine perfection, as well as to mankind. Hereby "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In this method of God's redeeming love, according to the riches of His grace, "he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

III. Another instance of sovereignty in the choice of means, in order to attain the ultimate end before considered, is a *special discrimination* with respect to the Saviour and the saved. Christ was chosen not only to procure suitable *means* of reconciliation by His obedience to the law, and by offering to the righteous Governor a sacrifice of unlimited worth, a *price* of redemption *sufficient* for all, but he was also appointed to be a *Surety* for the actual salvation of all those who eventually enjoy the privilege. The Messiah, while procuring the means of salvation, appears as the messenger of the Supreme Governor, graciously and mercifully making provision, and proclaiming the remedy provided to all mankind indefinitely, without any restriction of Jew or Gentile, Greek or barbarian, bond or free. But He acts as the minister of sovereign grace, the Administrator (who, with a glorious peculiarity, is the same as the Testator) of the New Testament, when He raises the dead in sin to a spiritual life, pours holy light into the mind, gives repentance and remission of sin, imparts joy to the troubled heart, and invigorates the soul to continue in well-doing unto the end. The atoning sacrifice offered to justice is the condition *sine quâ non* of redemption, the fundamental *means* of salvation; but redemption and salvation themselves are *personal* and actual benefits enjoyed.

The discriminative peculiarity of Christ's mediation includes the certainty of His applying to individuals those saving benefits which they would have neglected, or refused when offered to them. Thus actual and personal redemption from guilt, sin, and penal suffering in hell, (considered as a merited event,) must proceed from sovereign intention; and, therefore, the speciality of the Saviour's sub-

* 1 John iv. 9, 10.

stitution must originate in sovereign pleasure, in subserviency to an ultimate end. Is not this twofold appointment clearly implied in His own address to His Father in the character of Supreme Governor and Benefactor?—"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over *all flesh*, that he should give eternal life to *as many* as thou hast given him."* "All flesh" were given Him in one sense, but a limited number in another. In virtue of His meritorious humiliation and death, all mankind are under His power; and, in virtue of His engagement as a Surety, special benefits were to be applied by Him to individuals, including grace and salvation, even eternal life:—"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." † From these words, in their proper connexion, it appears that it is a part of Christ's peculiar office to afford *saving knowledge* to those whom the Father gave Him—that knowledge which is connected with "life eternal," as well as the *means* of it in the way of external revelation and instruction.

Instances of Divine *discrimination* in the choice of *means* to attain the ultimate end of the system of redemption are amazingly various, as well as numerous. It would be tedious to enlarge on the introductory apparatus previous to "the fulness of time,"—on the Saviour's assumption of our nature, with all its attendant circumstances,—on the *gifts* He bestows, as the spirit of repentance and faith, the pardon of sins, the imputation of righteousness, and regenerating grace,—on *supports* under trouble, and deliverance from the power of temptation. "Time would fail" to notice many wonderful instances of conversion contrary to all human probability, —how "persecutors and idolaters, fornicators and drunkards, thieves and extortioners," have been arrested and subdued by sovereign grace, when examples of sanctity, faithful testimonies, "words of truth and soberness," and even astonishing miracles, had failed to convince them. Many such characters have been washed and made white, justified for the sake of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit as communicated by Him, so as to be rendered meet to inherit the celestial kingdom.‡

Contrast these instances with the punctual but self-righteous Pharisees, the Sadducean rationalists, the learned scribes and law-

* John xvii. 1, 2. † Ver. 3. ‡ See 1 Cor. vi. 9–11.

yers, who were left to perish in their proud disdain of sovereign mercy and its appointed Mediator. "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. . . . . And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."* While those who boast of their virtue and morality, who depend on their own resources of power and sufficiency, are left desolate, behold, others, rescued from the fangs of the strongest habits, the haunts of dissipation and blasphemy, become the humble and holy disciples of Jesus! On a review of Jehovah's adorable sovereignty in His conduct toward His people, we may say to the Church with one of old, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. . . . . Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord!"†

* Matt. xxi. 42, 44. † Deut. xxxiii. 26–29.

CHAPTER VII.

A VIEW OF THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GRACE.

SECTION I.

Of Sovereign Grace, viewed in Different Relations.

MANY controversial differences have subsisted, and now subsist, among several denominations of Christians, occasioned by the want of accurate and settled notions of the nature of Divine GRACE. The import of the *term*, in general, is sufficiently plain, as denoting *favour;* but the difficulty, from which arises a difference of opinion, consists in this, that Divine favour is represented in the sacred oracles under several *aspects*, according to different relations and circumstances. By an attentive perusal of the Holy Scriptures, we shall find that the word sometimes denotes an *exhibition* of Divine favour; at other times, the *required effect* of that exhibition; and sometimes, *Divine influence* generating a spiritual principle, or a holy state of mind thus produced. We shall now produce the requisite evidence from the Scriptures themselves, to which the appeal is made, and from which these distinctions are deduced:—

I. Sometimes the term grace denotes Divine favour, in the way of *exhibition*, addressed to the understanding, judgment, will, and conscience of the moral agent. Thus the *manifestation* of Divine love, the benevolent compassion and mercy of God to a perishing world in general, or to some individuals among them, a *declaration* that with God there is forgiveness of sin, the gift of righteousness, saving power, an ability to deliver from slavery and wrath, and a readiness to bestow everlasting life and glory on terms mercifully proposed and equitably required,—obtain that denomination. This, I think, is decidedly the import of the fol-

lowing expressions:—"For the *grace* of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men;" or, more literally, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared,"*—that is, the *gospel* is preached, or appointed to be preached, to all nations and people, according to our Lord's commission. When the apostle Peter says, "This is the true *grace* of God wherein ye stand,"† he evidently means the *gospel*, in which is made a glorious exhibition of Divine favour. "The word of his *grace*,"‡ is a periphrasis denoting the same thing.

When St Paul says, "Ye are fallen from *grace*," (addressing persons who sought to be justified by the law,) he must intend that they had fallen or apostatised from the true evangelical doctrine,—that they had lost a just view of God's manifested favour to sinful men as the ground of their faith, and the hope of their salvation. When St Peter observes that some "prophesied of the *grace* that should come unto" the persons whom he addressed, he afterwards explains his meaning thus:—"They did minister [that is, instrumentally exhibit] the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the *gospel* unto you."§ The apostle Jude speaks of some "ungodly men turning the *grace* of our God into lasciviousness."‖ The context evidently shews, that nothing else can be meant by "grace" but the manifestation or declared exhibition of Divine favour, addressed to men who perversely abused it. Being *ungodly* men, they were *graceless*, in the subjective import of the word; and yet they had *grace* of some kind, which they "turned into lasciviousness." Does not this clearly prove that the *grace* which *ungodly* men, and, subjectively, *graceless* men, have and abuse, is the favour of God objectively proposed to them? It would be easy to produce other passages of Scripture equally decisive in proof of this acceptation of the term "grace," but these, I presume, are sufficient.

We may, however, make a few observations on this branch of our subject before we proceed to other acceptations of the word "grace." It is observable, that the whole of Divine revelation may be considered either as a *testimony* or as a *proclamation*, and both as *moral means*, addressed to mankind by the King of heaven, as their merciful Moral Governor. And—

First, The whole of Divine revelation, however diversified, may

* Tit. ii. 11. † 1 Pet. v. 12. ‡ Acts xx. 32.
§ 1 Pet. i. 10–12. ‖ Jude 4.

be considered as a *testimony* from God to men. It testifies, particularly, concerning GOD himself—His nature, His perfections, His works, purposes, and dispensations. It testifies concerning man—his nature, his dependence, his obligations, his apostasy, and his actions, both good and bad, and their consequences. It testifies concerning the world and the Church—the present and future state of existence, blessings and wrath, life and death, heaven and hell. Now, everything thus testified must be considered as addressed to the understanding, the judgment, and the will of man as a free agent, requiring an approbation of what is thus declared to be true and good, and a disapprobation of what is represented as false and evil. But—

Secondly, The whole of the Sacred Scriptures may be considered as a *proclamation* of the Supreme King addressed to men; and the things proclaimed may be comprised under the two ideas of Divine favours and equitable requisitions. Regarding man in a state of apostasy and ruin, they proclaim Divine love and mercy. The Sovereign of the universe issues a proclamation to the human race while in a perishing condition, which announces forgiveness, righteousness, and grace, life, strength, and comfort,—in one word, *salvation* from sin and misery. Such favours are implied in many *promises* made to collective bodies and to individuals, in *predictions* concerning the Messiah and His kingdom, in the *invitations* to partake of the good things exhibited, and in all the *preparations* made for the use of those who are invited. And it is obvious that these proclamations of Divine favours, provided and proposed, are addressed, not only to the understanding and judgment, but also to the *will* of men, as were the testimonies before mentioned. They do, indeed, convey great instruction; but all moral and Divine instruction is intended to operate on the will and affections, and thus to afford suitable means and inducements for compliance, obedience, and consolation.

Again, all Divine *laws*, whether moral or positive,—all *sanctions*, whether rewards or punishments,—all *invitations*, *threats*, and *expostulations*, however diversified, and by whatever means conveyed, imply a *requisition* of obedience. They require the obedience either of faith, of love, of fear, of worship, or of service. Now, it is plain, though the intellectual powers are first and immediately addressed, the will and affections are ultimately aimed at in all these proclamations, both of Divine favours and requisitions. A

bare *consideration* or contemplation of them is only a part of the implied obligation; and only then is the great end of them profitable to man as an accountable agent, when the active powers of the mind, the will, and the affections, are suitably influenced to exert themselves in holy obedience and useful practice.

Thirdly, In whatever light we view the holy records, however analysed, however classed, the whole and each part of the Old and New Testament must be of the nature of *moral means*, which, in some form or in some respects, are addressed to the *will* of the moral agent, in order to assist and induce him to make his accountable elections. Every address, of whatever kind, supposes that he is free in his choice; and every testimony and proclamation of Divine *favour* is in fact objective *grace*, and is justly entitled *gospel*, as being glad tidings to sinners. Sovereign favour lays the foundation; but equitable government demands compliance, and requires the moral agent to build upon it for eternity. This *objective grace* may, eventually, be ungratefully rejected, the Divine testimony disregarded or disbelieved, the heavenly proclamation undervalued and slighted; to the feast, mercifully and graciously prepared, many do not come, though invited, nay, "compelled" to come, by arguments the most conclusive, by promises the most engaging, and by threatenings the most awful. Many "will not come to Christ that they may have life," will not come to the Divine Physician for healing, though it be demonstrated to them that their moral disease will involve them in future misery, if they reject the proposed remedy. This view of grace, well considered, will assist us in forming consistent thoughts respecting other acceptations of the term, or other important truths expressed by it.

II. A second acceptation of the word *grace*, as used by the inspired writers, is the *effect* produced by the exhibited favours, before explained, in the minds of real converts. Thus, for example, they represent that Christian disposition which we otherwise express by the term *liberality*. "See that ye abound in this *grace* also;"* that is, as the connexion shews, See that ye exercise a generous and liberal temper in relieving the necessities of the indigent. And thus an improvement in the *Christian temper* is represented by St Peter, "But grow in *grace*, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."† When Barnabas came to Antioch, "and had seen the *grace* of God, he was glad;"‡ that is,

* 2 Cor. iv. 15, viii. 7. † 2 Pet. iii. 18. ‡ Acts xi. 23.

when he perceived the appropriate *effects* of evangelical truths, he rejoiced. St Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, exhorts them to be observant, "lest any man fail of the *grace* of God;"* that is, as he explains his meaning, lest any man fail of, or fall from, a pure, chaste, and self-denying temper.

The holy tempers and exercises of mind to which we have been referring, being no less the fruit of Divine influence than of evangelical truth, (as we shall prove in our progress,) it has been always customary in the Church to call them *Christian graces.* For, as love, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance, and the like, are denominated in Scripture "the *fruits* of the Spirit," so each is aptly styled a *grace* of the Spirit. Does any one resist persuasions, temptations, and incitements to sin with greater facility? Is he more easily induced to encounter difficulties in the discharge of known duty, or to forego personal gratification for the good of others? Is he more steady in his aim to bring every power of the soul to harmonise with the will, the plan, the glory of God? Is he more humble, more penitent, more meek, gentle, and patient under injuries; more affectionate and zealous in a good cause; more peaceable in his views and deportment; more simply dependent on sovereign favour; trusting and rejoicing in Christ Jesus as the Lord our righteousness, "having no confidence in the flesh;" "walking by faith and not by sight," looking at invisible and eternal realities? Does he grow up towards "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ;" setting his affections on things above, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, forgetting the things that are behind, and "reaching forth to those things which are before?" Then, in any of these or similar instances, he "grows in *grace.*"

This view of grace, therefore, we should consider as an *effect* not merely of Divine influence, but also of revealed truth. *Faith,* for instance, "cometh by hearing" the Divine testimony, or contemplating the Divine record. We *love* God supremely, because He is represented, especially in the gospel, as infinitely excellent and lovely. We *fear* Him, because of His awful majesty, His glorious power and perfect rectitude, made known to us in His works and word. We *believe* the Divine testimony, because God "that cannot lie," deceive, or do wrong, and whose authority is equitable, is He who testifies. We *hope* to enjoy future good things, because

* Heb. xii. 15.

the Divine word contains the promise of them to certain characters described. Is the true Christian born again, and made a new creature, bearing a resemblance to Christ in his views, tempers, and mental exercises, so that "old things are passed away," and "all things are become new?" This is effected by "the word of truth," which is an "incorruptible seed" sown in the mind. The new creation, or the new man, is an assemblage of Christian graces, generated and brought forth in the soul by revealed truth in connexion with the indwelling influence of the Holy Spirit.

Hence we find that the very *same* effect of this nature is ascribed at one time to the *word*, and at another to the *Spirit;* because both are concerned, but in different respects, in producing it. And, indeed, in this manner most of the Christian graces, individually noticed, are often represented. Thus *faith* is an effect both of revealed truth and of the Divine Spirit; for it is said at one time, or in one respect, to come "by hearing;" at another time, to be "of the operation of God." It implies a *testimony* to be credited, and a Divine principle affording a *spiritual view* of that testimony, whence the *effect*, "believing," is properly ascribed to either of these essential requisites. The same representation is applicable to every other Christian temper or exercise whatever, which may be expressed by the term *grace*.

Now, as these dispositions and holy tempers are evidently *required* to be exercised by those who enjoy the favours before mentioned,—the glad tidings of salvation, the dispensation of mercy, opportunities for worship, and inducements for the obedience of faith, which are commonly denominated "the means of grace,"—there seems to be a great propriety in calling faith, hope, love, joy, fear, patience, meekness, long-suffering, zeal, and the like, REQUIRED graces. For when it is said, "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ,"—"Let Israel *hope* in the Lord,"—"Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God,"—"*Rejoice* evermore,"—"O be *joyful* in the Lord,"—"Let Him be your *fear*, and let Him be your dread;"—these, and all other holy tempers in exercise, which Divine manifestations of truth have a moral *tendency* to excite, are equitably *required* by the Supreme Governor. And to question whether *all*, or only *some* of those to whom the word of truth and salvation is sent, are required to repent, believe, and obey, or to be "holy in all manner of conversation," is the same thing as to question whether *all*, or only *some* of those who hear the gospel testimony,

are the subjects of God's moral government. What is required is only that effect, or those fruits, which the representations made in the Word of God have a *genuine tendency* to produce in any mind which is not in a criminal state either of indifference or disaffection. Let the mind be in a right state, or what it *ought* to be, and the required effect will follow.

But here it should be observed, if God were obliged either in goodness, in equity, in faithfulness to His engagements, or in any respect whatever, to make the mind what it ought to be, required grace would be as universally exercised as the gospel is proclaimed. But this is not only contrary to fact, but also contrary to reason, to conscience, and to the notion of accountability and moral government. No one would or could then "fail of the grace of God" as to any temper or duty. Nay, if God were bound in justice, in honour, or in favour, to give and maintain a right mind, in order to secure the accountable agent from transgression, sinning would be impossible, contrary to every rational idea of his moral freedom. We may justly conclude, therefore, that the tempers and exercises above mentioned are fairly required by the Moral Governor, independently of the actual state of the mind, because Divine truth proposed is an adequate moral cause to produce the required effect where the disposition is not criminal.

The terms by which these important distinctions are expressed are of little moment, provided the ideas are accurately conveyed by them. Were any to prefer, when speaking of those graces which are equitably required to be exercised, the use of the term *reflected* graces, the distinction would be sufficiently preserved, and not improperly expressed. As we are obliged, on account of the poverty of language, to convey moral ideas in the way of allusion and analogy, we may compare objective grace, or moral means, to rays of light, which are either lost, or else *reflected* according to the quality of the subject on which they fall. And, indeed, if we would maintain a still more accurate discrimination of thought, both terms, *required* and *reflected*, might be conveniently and instructively used; the former having a reference to the just *demand* of the Moral Governor, and the latter to the *obligation* of the moral agent. What is *required* is a suitable improvement or proper use of the beams of instruction, love, and mercy, which a gracious Governor dispenses by His revealed

word; and the obedient subjects *reflect* these beams by shewing themselves to be a "chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people;" and thus they "shew forth the praises [or, virtues] of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light." But, alas! how often "the light shineth in darkness, but the darkness comprehendeth it not!" Notorious facts prove that claims and obedience are far from being commensurate. "Whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear," —whether the light of proclaimed mercy and truth be lost upon them, or suitably reflected by holy graces exercised,—in a word, whether obedience or disobedience mark their character, the requisition is inflexibly and most justly the same.

III. Sometimes the sacred oracles intend, by the term "grace," Divine influence generating a spiritual principle, or a holy state of mind thus generated or produced. In different connexions it designates either the agency of God, or a quality of the human mind. But, under this head, it will not be necessary to notice the exact difference in the passages I shall quote, which are intended only to prove an acceptation of the term essentially different from that in the preceding citations; and denoting an influence whereby free agents are effectually disposed and determined to a virtuous choice and conduct, enabled to know and love God, to believe the gospel and repent of sin, to receive the blessings offered, to trust in Christ as the only Saviour of sinners, to "delight in the law of God after the inward man," and to serve Him in righteousness and true holiness. When the Psalmist says, "The Lord will give *grace* and glory,"* what can he mean, but that God bestows by His holy influence a new nature or a Divine principle whereby the soul is prepared and qualified for future happiness? He evidently means a benefit or blessing with which glory is connected; but grace, as an exhibited favour in the promises, is by no means possessed of that character. Many have grace held forth in the word, who are graceless in heart, and therefore shall not have glory. When the apostle James, after Solomon, says, "But he giveth more *grace*, ... God resisteth the proud, but *giveth grace* unto the humble;"† what can he design but a Divine influence on the mind producing "the fruit of righteousness?" Grace, as held forth in the gospel, He sendeth to the proud, as well as to the humble, and *giveth* in the

* Ps. lxxxiv. 11. † James iv. 6; Prov. iii. 34.

way of offer; but the humble soul is enriched with grace of a different kind.

The prophet Zechariah must be understood to convey the same idea in the following passage:—"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of *grace* and of supplications;"* that is, a gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, in virtue of which the subjects of it would pour forth supplications and prayers acceptable to God. The Scriptures appear full of this important sentiment. What other interpretation can be fairly put upon the following passages?—"Out of his fulness have all we received, and *grace for grace;*"† that is, one degree of holy influence after another. "He said, My *grace* is sufficient for thee;"‡ that is, the Divine assistance that I will communicate. "But to every one of us is given *grace* according to the measure of the gift of Christ."§ Grace as exhibited and testified of in the gospel was given to each of the persons mentioned in the same measure, as admitting of neither more nor less; that grace therefore which was given "according to the measure of the gift of Christ" must be of a different kind; even a spiritual influence. The following texts require no comment:—"Grace be with thee." "Be strong in the *grace* that is in Christ Jesus."‖ "I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the *grace* of God which was with me."¶ "By the *grace* of God we had our conversation in the world."** In brief, this appears to be the import of those concluding short prayers in the apostolic writings which correspond to our Saviour's direction to pray for the Holy Spirit:—"The *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you,—be with your spirit,—be with you all."

The same idea is conveyed in many *other* forms of expression, in both the Old and the New Testament. What else can the Psalmist mean by these expressions:—"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. . . . . Uphold me with thy free Spirit?"†† Or Isaiah in these words:—"Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high?"‡‡ Is not this the doctrine of our blessed Lord and Saviour in the following language:—"Except a man be born . . . . of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

* Zech. xii. 10. † John i. 16. ‡ 2 Cor. xii. 9.
§ Eph. iv. 7. ‖ 1 Tim. vi. 21; 2 Tim. ii. 1.
¶ 1 Cor. xv. 10. ** 2 Cor. i. 12. †† Ps. li. 10, 12.
‡‡ Isa. xxxii. 15.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. . . . . So is every one that is born of the Spirit."* St Paul, when speaking of his own experience, and addressing his fellow-Christians, observes :—"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. . . . . Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. . . . . But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. . . . . If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. . . . . The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."† Again :—"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."‡ If these texts of inspiration, with others of the same import with which the Scriptures abound, do not prove the fact asserted,—that is, direct influence,—it behoves the rejecters of the doctrine to give a fair, unconstrained interpretation of them as importing something different. But this, I presume, cannot be done while sound criticism exists, or vital religion is accurately understood.

From these representations, especially where the term grace is used, what less can be inferred than an acceptation perfectly different from the acceptations under the two preceding heads? The idea implied is not, cannot be, *Divine favour* objectively exhibited, as *offered* to the choice of man after the manner of a testimony or a proclamation. Nor is it the fruit or *effect* of truth, before explained, as what is equitably required by the Supreme Governor, and is in every obedient subject experienced and exercised. To see the force of this conclusion nothing more is necessary than a mind free from prejudice, and disposed to leave the Scriptures to speak for themselves, without far-fetched and distorted comments. The plain and genuine import of the above-cited passages is an internal operation of the Holy Spirit, changing, renewing, regenerating, quickening, and transforming our souls; in a word, SUBJECTIVE grace, the nature of which is distinguishable from every other sense of the term.

But, as clear views of this branch of the general subject, sovereign grace, are of the highest importance, having an extensive

* John iii. 5, 6, 8. † Rom. viii. 2, 9-13, 26. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 12.

influence on many other parts of Scriptural doctrine, a few additional remarks may be useful. The *first* acceptation of grace denotes Divine favour *towards* the moral agent, resembling an invitation sent to him, and supported by persuasion, to partake of a provided bounty. The *second* acceptation of the term resembles actual compliance and participation on the part of those who are willing and obedient, while the same invitation is disregarded by others, or they have excuses to make. It is a voluntary compliance *from* the agent, who, being willing and obedient, "eats the good of the land,"—"eats in plenty, and is satisfied, and praises the name of the Lord his God." The *third* acceptation of grace resembles a penetrating, pervading, illuminating, purifying, and transforming influence of the Sun of righteousness, whereby the heart becomes well disposed, "good and honest;" the will becomes virtuously engaged, refusing the evil and choosing the good; and all the faculties of the soul and members of the body become "instruments of righteousness unto holiness."—Hence it is obvious, as general conclusions on the subject—

First, That grace displayed in the word, though *sovereign* in its origin, compared with the unworthiness of its objects, is only the benevolence of God in exercise, in relation to the plan and order of *moral government.* It regards men as moral agents, with freedom of will to accept or to reject it; and therefore can be of no other nature but that of *moral means,* in the manner of a proposal. The excellency of the *objects* proposed,—as God himself and His infinite perfections, Christ in His person and work, the Holy Spirit and all His riches of merciful influence,—when only announced and proposed to the intellectual and active powers of men, can be considered in no other light but as grace in the signification of *means.* For however free and sincere the proposal on the part of God, and however full and rich the display of truth and blessings, these will not profit if not "mixed with faith in them that hear."

Secondly, We may again remark, that the grace which is merely *objective* is properly and exclusively a *moral* cause; that is, a cause whose effect depends on the manner in which it is received or rejected, improved or abused. For though it has a *moral tendency* of the best kind, it may prove, through the fault of the free agent, useless or even destructive. The very same "grace of God that bringeth salvation," proves to one "the wisdom and power of

God," to another "a stumblingblock and foolishness;" to one a moral cause of life, and to another an occasion of death and destruction, as the heart is lowly and virtuous, or proud and depraved. It is a seed sown; if it falls unto good ground, it brings forth acceptable fruit, but if upon the trodden path or the stony places of unrenewed minds, it fails of success.

Thirdly, The grace which consists in the Holy Spirit's immediate energy is a *physical* cause; that is, a cause which produces its appropriate effects without depending on the intellect, the will, or the moral agency of the subject. This has been sometimes called a *moral* cause; but very improperly, because it is not founded on its relation to moral government, nor does the effect depend on the choice and exertion of the recipient. True Christians are born, "not of the will of man, but of God;" "for it is God that worketh in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure." This grace is not an object of choice, any more than a difference of peculiar natures, and therefore the effect is produced physically. And thus were Adam's primitive righteousness and holiness produced when created with him. What is thus effected in the soul is a *new* nature, which influences the choice of the agent without disturbing his freedom; because it is the province and an excellency of rational beings to choose according to the influence of their natures respectively. It is also a *Divine* nature, which qualifies the soul to "exercise itself unto godliness," and to act according to righteousness and true holiness. Nor does the idea of *supernatural* or *spiritual*, by which both the cause and its appropriate effect are sometimes denominated, militate against the propriety of the term *physical* being applied to it, in the sense now explained, because those terms are themselves included in this denomination. Some indeed have, by way of objection, and perhaps others through mistake, confounded physical influence with the production of some distinct, physical faculty of mind; but the Divine energy for which I plead implies no such thing, any more than the creating of our first parents, which all must allow to be a physical act, implies that their spiritual life which was effected by it was a physical faculty.

Fourthly, Of these three scriptural ideas expressed by the term *grace*, (and to which all others may be reduced,) two of them are used in a plain and proper, and one of them in a figurative sense. The *proper* sense of the word is *favour;* and this is the obvious

import of that grace of God which is proclaimed in the gospel, and also of that which denotes the influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart, whereby it is renovated and qualified for spiritual exercises. But that grace which denotes holy tempers, holy affections and exercises, in brief, those qualities which are commonly termed "Christian graces," is so only in a *figurative* sense, that is, metonymically, in which the name of the cause is given to the effect; for these are only the effects or fruits of Divine favours—grace revealed in the word, and grace generated in the heart.

Fifthly, Those effects which are called Christian graces, as required of God and exercised by men, are not produced except by the union or joint concurrence of sovereign grace both objective and subjective,—the truth of the word and a holy principle from the Spirit. For, without an objective truth revealed there can be no fear, or love, or hope, or any other Christian temper in exercise, any more than distinct vision without a visible object. And without a gracious principle produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit, revealed truth will not, in fact, produce any spiritual effect, however excellent the moral tendency of that revealed truth. The obligation to comply with what is required, however, arises from the moral tendency of the objects revealed, or exhibited to the mind; and the failure of the effect, as love to God, or faith in Christ, is a failure of what *ought* to be in the subject. Were not this the real state of the case, no one would ever fail of doing what he ought to do,—obligation and the discharge of it by dutiful obedience would be always and necessarily commensurate; which is contrary to fact, and absurd in theory.

Sixthly, From the premises it follows, that what actually determines free-will to the choice of real good, and which is properly termed motive, consists of two parts—an *object* exhibited, and a *principle* infused. Thus, objective grace constitutes but a part of motive; for, if it constituted the whole, since the wills of moral agents are equally free in their choice, how could any will fail of being determined to what is good and holy by that objective inducement, the moral tendency of which is the same to all? But incontrovertible experience proves, that the word preached does not profit many of those who hear it; and the same remark holds true respecting other moral means, as invitations to enjoy privileges, exhortations to duty, warnings against danger, and even miracles. We may therefore conclude, that, however the

word "motive" has been often used in common discourse, and even in some philosophical discussions, if we understand by it that which determines or moves the will in its choice, the object, argument, or persuasive address, can constitute but a *part* of it. For why is the same address, the same preaching, the same gospel, to one the means of salvation, and to another an occasion of death and misery? Surely the difference is not in the objective grace, for its language, and exhibitions of truth and goodness, are precisely the same in themselves. The excellence, therefore, of this part of the motive, irrespectively of benevolent influence rendering the mind well disposed, never does secure (though it ought to secure) a happy result, through the depravity and criminal opposition of the agent; but when the mind is as it *ought* to be, its volitions will be good amidst the most artful and powerful temptations. In short, if there be no *other* constituent part of motive, besides the objective good proposed, either all wills would be determined alike, or else be determined by no adequate cause; neither of which positions can be maintained.

Nor can it be maintained that the will either of man or of his Maker determines *itself*. The supposition arises from a false notion of the nature of the will, which is only the instrument of power. And to suppose that the will of the blessed God is the *source* of His power, is little better than to suppose it to be also the source of His *nature*, which must appear to minds habituated to estimate the truth of ideas to border upon blasphemy. What! omnipotence and a self-existent nature derived from will! Indeed, it is rational to say, that the Divine will *acquiesces* with infinite complacency in the Divine power and nature, and every perfection of that nature; but how absurd the thought that they *originate* in will! And yet this would be the fact, if the will of God were a *self-determining power*. For, unavoidably, either the will must depend upon the power and nature of Jehovah, or His power and nature must depend upon His will, for there cannot be conceived two original principles of independence. The truth is, I appeal to every candid inquirer, the Divine will, and every other conceivable will, is but the *medium* of power, which power operates according to the *nature* of the agent whose power it is. The uncaused and infinitely perfect nature of Deity, which includes all possible perfection, secures a right direction of power, and a holy use of the will. Nor is there any other security for a virtuous and holy

use of the human will, but the same blessed nature, by a participation of its influence, which influence we are encouraged to expect by earnest and importunate prayer.* To which may be added, that the doctrine of a *direct* influence of the Holy Spirit on the soul is implied in those very petitions which we are thus taught to present at the footstool of Divine mercy.

* See Matt. vii. 7–11; and Luke xi. 5–13.

Section II.

Of Sovereign Subjective Grace; its peculiar nature, necessity, and importance.

We shall now investigate a little more closely, first, the special nature of sovereign subjective grace; and, secondly, its necessity and importance, from Scripture, from principles of reason, and from analogy.

I. Our first inquiry relates to the *special nature* of sovereign subjective grace. And here it will be proper to guard against all ambiguity which may arise from the use of terms; for "subjective grace" is liable to be taken to denote either a producing cause, or an effect produced,—an influence from God on the subject, or an inward abiding principle. To both ideas the denomination is applicable, though most properly to the latter.

First, Subjective grace, under the notion of a *producing cause*, is a holy influence from God. Considered as an influence, it differs essentially from the two other acceptations of grace; for that which is objective is only a message from God, in the form of a testimony or proclamation, which it is left to the choice of the subject to receive or to reject. And that grace which is required is not an influence from God to man, but a duty from man to God. This causal influence is an energy, or powerful operation of God on the mind. It is denominated holy, because of the holy *effects* produced by it; for, as it is merely an influence from God, this epithet would not distinguish it from others, since all His operations are holy, as perfectly consistent with the sanctity of His nature. He is "righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works." And His energy pervades universal nature, whereby all elements and all principles of every order produce their appropriate effects.

To those who are engaged in analysing natural substances, and whose attention is directed to chemical affinities and changes, new and astonishing results are continually brought to view; but they do not think themselves justified in rejecting the reality of an effect

because they have not a precise idea of the nature of the principle, or of the intimate and often mysterious manner of operation whereby the change is effected. It must be allowed by all reflecting minds that the laws of nature are not independent principles, and that second causes operate only by the energy of the first; but the *mode* of that operation, however evident the sensible effects, often lies concealed from human scrutiny. On metaphysical and infallible principles, we are sure that every physical phenomenon in the universe is beholden to the power of the omnipresent Deity; and with equal certainty we know, or ought to know, that holiness, in every created subject of it, proceeds from the same source. If the result be a *holy* change, there is a propriety in designating the causal influence by that epithet, notwithstanding the exact modal difference of operation may still remain mysterious. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Secondly, Subjective grace, under the notion of an *effect produced*, is a new spiritual nature, a Divine, holy principle of true virtue. It is a direct and an immediate effect of sovereign gracious energy, by which it is distinguished from a mere natural difference between one person and another. It is a *new* nature, as what is graciously superinduced, instead of that which was lost by the first apostasy; *spiritual*, not only because it is produced by the operation of the Divine Spirit, but also because it resembles Him; a *nature*, to distinguish it from a mere physical faculty or power of the mind. For though the Divine influence producing it is properly denominated physical, as contradistinguished from what is moral or suasory, yet the produced effect is not a physical faculty, but a spiritual nature. It is said to be *Divine*, because it is the operation of God, not after the manner of effects produced by second causes, but by His immediate energy on the mind. It is also *holy*, not only because it proceeds from a holy source, (for so do all effects in created nature,) but because it renders the subject morally pure. It is called a *principle*, because it operates as a cause of moral purity, and is a source of holy tempers and services; in a word, of *true* virtue. Comparative or partial virtues, at least what are vulgarly so called, may be found without this principle; but that essential virtue which stamps a truly virtuous character, is an effect of this principle. Every one who has it

loves God supremely, and all other beings and qualities for His sake, which no one destitute of it ever did.*

Natural differences are exceedingly various. Some human beings (as well as other species of animals) are fierce, violent, and untractable, others are quiet, calm, and gentle; some are of a quarrelsome, others of a peaceful temper; some are courageous, others timid. These differences, however, are only shades of distinction in the same nature; but subjective grace constitutes another nature. Of this distinction we are furnished with illustrations from every part of the world around us. Thus, for instance, grains of wheat may differ among themselves, yet they are of the same nature; but compared with grains of barley, they are of a nature extremely different. One oak may differ from another; but the very nature of a cedar is essentially distinct. Now what constitutes these differences of nature? Why should a cedar differ from an oak, a rose from a lily, or a myrtle from a thorn? The genial influence of the sun and atmosphere, and even the soil itself, may be the same; and yet the productions put on forms the most diversified. Again, to borrow an instance from animal nature, why should the noble horse differ from the sluggish ox, and both from the timid and woolly sheep, in so many respects, though they breathe the same air, eat the same herbage, and drink at the same spring? The cause must be traced to the sovereign pleasure of the Creator, whatever subordinate theory of

* "The Spirit of God is given to the true saints, to dwell in them, as His proper and lasting abode; and to influence their hearts, as a principle of *new nature*, or as a Divine, supernatural spring of life and action. The Scriptures represent the Holy Spirit, not only as moving, and occasionally influencing the saints, but as dwelling in them as His temple, His proper abode, and everlasting dwelling-place, (1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16; John xiv. 16, 17.) And He is represented as being so united to the faculties of the soul, that He becomes there a principle or spring of a *new nature* and life. The sap of the true vine is not only conveyed into them as the sap of a tree may be conveyed into a vessel, but is conveyed as sap is from a tree into one of its living branches, where it becomes a *principle* of life. The Spirit of God being thus communicated and united to the saints, they are from thence properly denominated from it, and are called *spiritual*. The grace which is in the hearts of the saints is of the *same nature* with the Divine holiness, though infinitely less in degree; as the brightness of a diamond which the sun shines upon is of the same nature with the brightness of the sun, but only that it is as nothing to it in degree. Therefore Christ says, (John iii. 6,) 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit;' *i.e.*, the grace that is begotten in the hearts of the saints is something of the same nature with that Spirit, and so is properly called a *spiritual nature*."—*Edwards on Religious Affections; Works*, vol. iv., p. 104, &c.

explanation be adopted. Be the primordial principles, the laws of attraction and repulsion, the affinities and chemical changes what they may, the phenomena must be ultimately referred to the will of Him who appointed them. "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."* How reasonable, therefore, is the conclusion, that real virtue and holiness should be considered as an appointed nature, produced by the Divine Renovator, as a principle of spiritual and holy life!†

II. Our next inquiry relates to the *necessity* and *importance* of subjective grace. On this part of the subject I shall appeal to Scripture, to reason, and to analogy.

First, The Holy Scriptures are abundantly explicit, and therefore decisive, in favour of the position, that Divine influence produces in a direct manner a holy principle in the soul. What less can be meant by the following declarations, among many others? —"Create in me a clean heart;" "I will put my Spirit within them;" "I will pour out upon them the Spirit of grace;" "Except a man be born of the Spirit;" "My Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask;" "Who were born of God;" "He worketh in us to will and to do;" "The Lord opened the heart of Lydia."

* 1 Cor. xv. 38.

† "Other power may make a great alteration in men's present frames and feelings; but it is the power of a *Creator* only that can change the *nature*. And no discoveries or illuminations but those that are Divine and supernatural will have this supernatural effect. All grace and goodness in the hearts of the saints is entirely from God; and they are universally and *immediately* dependent on Him for it. He gives His Spirit to be united to the faculties of the soul, and to dwell there *after the manner of a principle of nature;* so that the soul, in being endued with grace, is endued with a *new nature*. In the soul where Christ savingly *is*, there He *lives*. He does not merely live *without* it, so as violently to actuate it; but he lives *in* it, so that the soul also is *alive*. Grace in the soul is as much from Christ, as the light in a glass held out in the sunbeams is from the sun. But this represents the manner of the communication of grace to the soul but in part; because the glass remaining as it was, the *nature* of it not being changed at all, it is as much without any lightsomeness in its nature as ever. But the soul of a saint receives light from the Sun of righteousness in such a manner that its *nature* is changed, and it becomes properly a luminous thing. Not only does the sun shine in the saints, but they also become little suns, partaking of the nature of the fountain of their light. In this respect, the *manner* of their derivation of light is like that of the lamps in the tabernacle, rather than that of a reflecting glass; which though they were lit up by fire from heaven, yet thereby became themselves burning, shining things. Grace is compared to a seed implanted, that not only is *in* the ground, but has *hold* of it; has *root* there, *grows* there, and is an abiding *principle* of life and nature there."—*Edwards on Religious Affections; Works*, vol. iv., p. 233.

To transcribe all the passages which tend to confirm this point, would be to swell these pages unnecessarily. What unprejudiced reader would think of ascribing to objective means these operations and effects? Those who deny the direct influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind, in order that the word may produce its appropriate effect, intend, no doubt, to maintain the honour of revealed truth, and the importance of right sentiments; but we should remember, that they do most honour to the Holy Scriptures who attribute to them that office which infinite wisdom has appointed for them, and who do not ascribe to them what is inconsistent with their claims. But do they claim the prerogative of "opening the eyes of the blind?" of "taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh?" of "creating a clean heart, and giving a right spirit?" of "working in us to will and to do?" Where are the sacred passages? When they are produced, they may be considered.—Will it be pleaded that the hypothesis here opposed is more conformable to reason? Then—

Secondly, To reason let us appeal. It is acknowledged that plain scriptural evidence ought to impose humble silence on all conjectural reasonings. But for such evidence, against the preceding view of subjective grace, we look in vain. The only remaining alternative, therefore, is to examine what interpretation of Scripture is the most consistent with clear principles. But what can be more inconsistent with just principles of reason, than to suppose that objective means constitute the *whole* of the motive? or that there can be a motive unconnected with the antecedent state of the mind? Yet, one of these unreasonable suppositions is unavoidable, if we maintain that there is no gracious influence but what is in, or inseparable from the word. What other supposition is conceivable? Not, I presume, that Divine influence itself, as well as the promise of it, is of the nature of objective means. The Divine Spirit is not like a sail subject to the will of man, but as a propitious gale which blows "where it listeth." It is ours to spread the sail, but not to command the wind; to expand our desires, but not to "direct the Spirit of the Lord." More particularly—

1. If there be no direct sovereign influence, no subjective grace, but what is involved in, or inseparably connected with the verbal testimony, then no one can be the subject of salvation but he who *understands* that testimony. For of what use is a testimony to

him who does not understand the terms or the language in which it is delivered? To him it is no testimony; as to an infant, an idiot, the deaf and dumb, or a child uninstructed through the neglect of the better informed. Is it reasonable to suppose, that the Spirit of the Lord is so absolutely restrained to the testimony that no one can be possessed of *salvation* without understanding it? But salvation from sin and wrath is inconceivable, except we admit a Divine influence and a spiritual regeneration. The inference, therefore, is unavoidable, that there is a sovereign subjective grace, in some instances, without the word, or else there can be no salvation for infants, idiots, the deaf and dumb, or any human beings but such as have a verbal testimony conveyed to the understanding. The conclusion is not that all such persons *must* be saved, but, on the principle opposed, that none *can* be saved; which is a presumptuous limitation of God's mercy, and a degrading reflection on Jesus Christ as the Redeemer, as if He *could* not save any without the use of words; not to add, how revolting the thought is to Christian feelings.

2. If there be no Divine direct influence, none but what is inseparable from the word as its vehicle or instrument, the sentiment must be sought either from revelation, or from the supposition of subjective grace, as before stated, being inconsistent with reason and analogy. Many passages have been produced as direct proofs of our doctrine, and no passage is objected which is not capable of being explained in perfect consistency with those proofs. It follows, therefore, as the opposite interpretations cannot be both true, that the one must be more consistent with the anology of faith than the other. Here also we may rest secure, until something plausible be brought on the other side. Nor does it appear that the objectors plead the *reasonableness* of their sentiment, abstracted from Divine testimony; for they do not pretend to establish it by rational principles, or by fair analogy. But we appeal to both, as well as to direct Scripture proofs, in harmony with the whole current of Divine revelation.

3. As the sentiment, that the Divine testimony *alone* effects a spiritual change in the human mind, is incompatible with the actual depravity of human nature, ascertained both by Scripture and universal experience; so the notion that there is no *direct* influence, none but what is dependent upon, or inseparable from a verbal testimony, confounds two modes of Divine operation which

are, in their own nature, perfectly distinct. What can be plainer, than the fact that the verbal testimony of Scripture is of the nature of moral means, and that such means produce a moral effect according to the moral principle of the agent? "Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles?" or, "Does a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?" Every moral agent, unavoidably, must have *some* principle, either good or bad, *prior* to the declaration of the testimony. Is it a good principle? Then it must be such without any concurrence of the word; for, from the supposition, it was in the subject before the verbal testimony was made known to him. Is it a bad principle? Then how comes it to be changed? If by a direct influence, the point in question is given up; but if by the word, a contradiction is involved, that moral means are not moral means, but some physical influence producing a moral principle. If it be said, that Divine influence changes the moral principle *by means* of the word, this involves the same contradiction as before; as it declares a moral mean, the verbal testimony, to be not a moral mean, but a physical operation. It supposes Divine influence changing the unalterable truth of things. It ascribes to a moral instrumentality what, in the nature of things, belongs to a physical cause exclusively. On the theory under consideration, if there be any conversion effected, it is a change of the nature of the word into what it was not before, and not the nature of the man, or his moral principle.

The true state of the question is not, whether some great and glorious change be effected in the human mind by means of the Divine testimony, for this is confessed on both sides; but, whether the Holy Spirit produces, by means of the word, a change of moral principle. And what else is the affirmative of this question, but an assertion, that a moral mean is converted into a physical instrument by the Holy Spirit, in order that it may effect a change of principle, from bad to good; and which *effect* of the word, in the hand of the Spirit, is the *cause* why the word produces that very effect! Allow a direct influence,—whether it be simultaneous with the testimony or not, does not affect the question,—and all these absurd consequences are avoided. The fact is, that the two operations, that of the Spirit, and that of the word, are of a character perfectly distinct, however coincident as to time and place. The one is physical, the other moral; the one *in* the subject, the other

towards him; the one regards him as a passive recipient, the other as a free agent; the one proceeds from God as a sovereign benefactor, the other proceeds from Him as a moral governor; the one on the plan of sovereignty, the other on that of equity. Divine influence is a physical cause of a moral effect, or of a moral principle, which is a kind of creation; but the operation of the word on the mind is that of a moral mean, the tendency of which is to produce a moral effect, but which, in reality, is successful or unsuccessful, according to the moral principle, or actual state of the mind when addressed. Where the operation of the Divine Spirit produces a holy principle, the Sacred Word produces, also, the happiest effects; as filial fear, unfeigned faith, supreme love to God, and "hope that maketh not ashamed;" in a word, a body of Christian graces. The very existence of such effects depends on objects revealed; but not so the existence of a holy principle, which depends, exclusively, on the operation of the Holy Spirit. If we would form a just estimate of the sentiment now defended, we should be far from regarding it as a point of indifference; for though preachers and writers may be very useful without forming an accurate judgment on the question, yet the systematic denial of it is not of the same cast. It is a sentiment of radical importance, if we regard its genuine consequences; since from wrong notions of the Spirit's operations, the danger is not small of denying them altogether.

There is reason to believe that many are betrayed into wrong conclusions on this point, from the circumstance of a saving change being manifested, and Christian graces being produced, by means of Divine truth. But since the Scriptures explicitly teach us that Divine influence is also necessary in order to produce these effects, they hastily infer that the word is an instrument in the hand of the *Spirit*, as the shortest way to settle the business, without aiming at clear ideas, or caring for accurate discrimination. But were they to take the trouble of reflecting on the subject, (and surely its importance demands this,) they would see that the word is an instrument in the hand of God only as a moral governor, and that the influence of the Spirit, in the nature of the case, admits of no instrument. The moral governor operates by instrumental means, and so does the human mind; and of this character is the word of truth in both respects. But a Divine agency on the mind

is, in scriptural estimation, a sovereign creating act, which admits of no medium of operation. To withhold from it this character, is virtually to deny its existence.

Some, indeed, have urged the simplicity of the doctrine here controverted. This was also urged by the ancient chemists, when they confined to four or five radical principles the whole material world. But such pretended simplicity is of little worth when confronted by direct evidence to the contrary. Under a similar pretence, and to avoid closer investigation, many have maintained that the will of God is the source of all things and events, good, bad, and indifferent. But of what use is a conjectural simplicity, when overturned by demonstrative evidence? It is justly stated, that physical effects are produced by the instrumentality of second causes, according to the present laws of nature. But was creation itself, or any *nature* in the universe, ever produced by the instrumentality of persuasion or any other moral means? Persuasion, indeed, may excite and elicit a principle in rational natures; but the idea of its giving existence to the principle or nature so excited and elicited, is incongruous, unsupported by Scripture, and revolting to reason.

Thirdly, Having noticed the direct evidence of Scripture, and considered the reasonableness of the doctrine, as before stated and explained, let us now view it in the light of analogy, for further illustration. To this mode of illustration the Holy Scriptures themselves frequently refer us. How often do they represent a holy principle wrought in the soul by the Spirit of God as a Divine *life!* For example:—"He that hath the Son hath *life;*" "Alienated from the *life* of God;" "Ye have no *life* in you;" "He shall have the light of *life;*" "To be spiritually-minded is *life;*" "The Spirit is *life,* because of righteousness;" "Being heirs together of the grace of *life;*" "The law of the Spirit of *life.*" The leading idea conveyed by this term "life" is the *well-being* of any person or thing to which it stands related. In the material world, from which the language of analogy is borrowed, we have different kinds of life—as elementary, vegetative, and animal; and from each we may borrow a striking illustration of the importance of those views of grace which have been advanced, and especially of an inward principle in conjunction with outward means, in order to produce an appropriate effect.

Taking the word "life" to denote the well-being of a thing, we may say of fire, that it has an *elementary* life; that it is either dead

or lively, as well as latent or excited. Thus, for instance, the life of *fire* seems to be the ground of the allusion, when St Paul exhorts Timothy, (σὲ ἀναζωπυρεῖν τὸ χάρισμα τοῦ Θεοῦ,) "*that thou stir up the gift of God* which is in thee;" * as if he had said, Suffer not the gift that is in thee to grow *dead*, but stir it up that it may be *revived* and excited to a flame by exercise and diligence. For this elementary life two things are necessary—the fuel, and a principle of fire. Absurd would be the notion that *fuel* would *generate* a flame, or the life of the fire, without a distinct element or principle to kindle it; or, on the other hand, that the element of fire alone would be sufficient to generate a flame or glow without fuel, which is the (*pabulum ignis*) food or supply of this elementary life. The flame, the glow, the life of the fire, is the product of *both* united. In like manner, two things united are necessary to produce love to God, or any other reflected grace, which are the two constituent parts of a determining motive—an objective good as the fuel, and a holy principle from sovereign influence as the kindling element. Without these, no "stirring up" would produce the effect; but from both united in the soul may arise the holy flame of love to God and goodness. It is the Christian's business to stir it up in himself and others. "And let us consider [heed, or observe] one another, [εἰς παροξυσμὸν ἀγάπης,] *for the stirring up*, or *excitement of love* and of good works." † And he who has it not should ask that he may receive it, and seek that he may find it, since God has promised to "give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

A similar analogy is observable in *vegetative* life, which is well adapted to illustrate the subject now discussed, and which is frequently employed as the ground of scriptural allusions. Of a good man it is said, "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." ‡ Bad and good characters are thus described by the prophet:—"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord: for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat

* 2 Tim. i. 6. † Heb. x. 24. ‡ Ps. i. 3.

cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."* Solomon has the same allusion when he says, "The root of the righteous yieldeth fruit."† And a greater than Solomon observes, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."‡ And again:—"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit."§ Thus also His forerunner:—"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."‖ It would be easy to fill many pages of quotations in which the moral states of men are compared to vegetative life; I shall, however, conclude with only one passage more:—"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. . . . . Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."¶

The language of Scripture is full of emblematic representations, analogy, and allusions to objects of sense when inculcating moral sentiments; and perhaps no sensible object is so frequently the ground of its figurative language as what relates to vegetation. Hence the frequent occurrence of scenes which include tillage, seed, and harvest; planting, growing, blossoms, and fruit; so many species of trees, vines, fig-trees, cedars, myrtles, thorns, and briers; the root, stock, branches, grafting, &c. Now, we may remark, not more applicable is this beautiful source of figurative language to the political and moral state of a nation, than to the moral and spiritual character of an individual. No one would contend that, because the sun and air *generate* the verdure, bloom, and fruit, therefore there is no distinct *antecedent* principle of vegetation. Nor would a gardener conclude, that because his plant has the vital sap, he need not expose it to the warmth of the sun or the influence of air. The fact is, that the verdure, the health, and the fruitfulness of the plant, are the result of the vital principle and the genial external influences conjointly. Thus also

* Jer. xvii. 5–8. † Prov. xii. 12. ‡ Matt. xv. 13.
§ Matt. xii. 33. ‖ Matt. iii. 10. ¶ Matt. vii. 15–20.

the soul that is blessed, "whose leaf withereth not, and which bringeth forth fruit in season," has a spiritual nature and life distinct from these effects. And He who gave existence to the plant, and to every plant its own peculiar nature, and He only, can restore either the vegetative life when once lost, or the spiritual life of the human mind. In vain is the dead tree planted in a fruitful soil, and well watered; in vain the salubrious air, the cheering light, and the genial sun: the restoration of life is at the sovereign pleasure of new-creating energy, as well in the moral as in the physical sense. A radical *principle* is not *produced by* those elements which are destined to support and nourish it.

We may find another illustration in the *animal* life. No animal can subsist without food, air, and exercise, more or less; but we cannot infer thence, that these could *generate* the principle of life. This is *presupposed*, and contributes to the existence of the exercised functions, no less than the (*pabulum vitæ*) means of subsistence. The vital energies are, in reality, the result of both combined. And here the question is not how one life propagates itself, in virtue of the Divine command, "Be fruitful and multiply," or the appointed course of nature; but how life, when lost, is again restored. When a lamp is extinct, how is it to be lighted? When a plant has lost the vital sap, how is it revived? When a body is dead, (as that of Lazarus or of Jesus,) how is it reanimated? As to the first, it is not by the accumulation of fuel; as to the second, not by the surrounding elements; and as to the last, not by the exertions of man.

I am aware how a Pelagian divine or philosopher would endeavour to evade this illustration by substituting another. Though the flame is extinguished, he would say, a little vital air will rekindle it; though the plant droops and withers, water will revive it; and though life is apparently gone, it is only a temporary suspension,—the application of warmth and of stimulants will restore it. It is acknowledged that illustrations are not identical with arguments; comparisons are explanatory of the thing compared. I have therefore no objection to a Pelagian explaining his opinion in this way. He considers the Divine life of the soul as *partially* gone; and that it may be recovered merely by the application of *means*, such as education, instruction, moral suasion, and the like. I consider the same life as *totally* gone; and that no moral means, without a sovereign spiritual influence,

are adequate to restore it. Which opinion is founded in truth, is to be sought, not from illustrations, but from scriptural arguments. My design by comparisons is to explain, rather than to prove.

Sometimes, indeed, the *scriptural* comparison implies a strong proof, and to illustrate is to confirm. For the illustration, in such instances, derives all its pertinence from the implication of argument. Thus, for example, the sacred oracles compare Divine influence to a heavenly fire *communicated:*—"He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." If this be not expressive of sovereign influence as the source of apostolic knowledge and actions, perfectly distinct from moral means, or objective exhibitions of truth, what conceivable propriety can there be in the figure? The Scripture also compares the soul deprived of Divine life, or without vital union to Christ, to a withered branch severed from a tree; and apostates, to trees "plucked up by the roots." If there be no vital influence communicated from Christ to His real disciples, in a manner totally different from objective truth, what consistent meaning can be put on the figurative language? And when animal life is the ground of comparison, Divine influence is represented as "quickening the dead" after the likeness of Christ's resurrection:—"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." So that the *illustrations* as well as the plainer *testimonies* of Scripture, are decidedly in favour of subjective grace and its great importance in real religion.

Another set of analogical illustrations might be borrowed from the animal *senses*, with which the Divine records abound:—"To *open* their *eyes*, and to turn them from darkness to light;" "*Open* thou mine *eyes*, that I may *behold* wondrous things out of thy law;" "In thy light shall we *see* light;" "Then the *eyes* of the blind shall be *opened;*" "To *open* the blind *eyes;*" "The *eyes* of your understanding being *enlightened;*" "Because darkness hath blinded his *eyes;*" "But now mine *eye seeth* thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent." From these and many other passages of Holy Writ, how manifest is it that a comparison is instituted between the visive sense and something spiritual. In the figurative allusion three particulars are evidently concerned: an *object* exhibited to view in a suitable medium,—the *eye* that sees,—and the *vision* itself. The vision, it is plain, is the effect of two things united—the object in a suitable medium viewed, and the visive faculty. In this case also the analogy is very striking; the truths of Scrip-

ture clearly represented are the object,—the renewed understanding is the opened and well-formed eye,—and the spiritual perception is the vision. What can be meant by "opening the eyes of the blind," but subjective grace enlightening the understanding? "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Illuminating grace removes the moral incapacity of the mind, and then gospel truths are spiritually understood. "The natural man," being destitute of subjective grace, and his intellect resembling a blind eye, "understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

How often in Scripture is the sense of *hearing* employed as an illustration of the same subject:—"He *openeth* also their *ear* to discipline:"—"He *wakeneth mine ear* to *hear* as the learned. The Lord God hath *opened mine ear*, and I was not rebellious." As this text relates to the Messiah, what can be designed by the figure but Divine influence (which He had without measure) insuring obedience? "Behold, their *ear* is *uncircumcised;*" "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye *cannot hear* my word." In this illustration also three things are implied: the *sound*, or the sonorous percussion of air,—the well-formed *ear*,—and the actual *hearing*. The sound is not heard if the cause of deafness be not removed; and this is precisely the case in the application of the figure to the moral state of men. The gospel is a "joyful sound," but the ungodly do not hear it in a spiritual sense, because deaf, "uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in ear." The deaf have ears, and so have the wicked a natural faculty; and the difference lies in the one being excusable for a physical defect, and the other condemnable because the defect is voluntary, and therefore criminal.

Were it needful, it would be easy to apply the illustration to all the other animal senses—tasting, smelling, and feeling. And it is observable that the sacred writings allude to them, as well as to the preceding, in reference to this very subject. The exercise of grace is "*tasting* that the Lord is gracious;" and the allusion would have no pertinence but upon the supposition of a moral faculty corresponding to the natural. The blessings announced in revealed truth are often represented under the emblem of a rich *feast*, "a great supper," "wines on the lees well refined," and

provisions adapted to the palate in various forms. But it is manifest that without hunger and thirst, and a palate to relish the provision, as a moral qualification, the soul will not be satisfied. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The same distinctions may be easily applied to the other animal senses, which, in like manner, for the production of the organic effects, require both a subjective quality of the organ and an appropriate object.

It may be proper here to advert to a plausible objection, which, though it has been cursorily noticed, claims an express consideration:—"If subjective grace be a *nature* absolutely different from, and independent of our will, and of the means we can employ, what room is there for *prayer*, or for an expectation of obtaining advantage from any of the exercises of religion?" I answer, first, where there *is* that Divine nature in the soul, sacred truth, instituted ordinances, and all moral means, especially an application to God by prayer, are suited to its growth and welfare. Every man *ought* to apply to God by prayer; and his moral inability is no real excuse for the omission, but rather, as it consists in disinclination or aversion, is an aggravation of blame. And, secondly, prayer is the most *rational* service in which apostate man can be engaged, as an expression of his dependence on God's favour and assistance. The very nature of prayer implies insufficiency in the supplicant, and all-sufficiency in God. And the consideration of this new nature being the fruit of sovereign will, rather than at our command, is at once a ground of encouragement that we may obtain it, on compliance with a Divine injunction, and a strong reason why we should apply to God for its donation. It is at His free disposal to bestow upon us His Holy Spirit, and He has promised the inestimable favour in the use of appointed means.* And this is perfectly analogous to His providential conduct. Though success in any undertaking depends on the will of God, yet for us to neglect the means pointed out in the course of providence is most unreasonable; because the accomplishment of His will, however sovereign, does not supersede, but includes our adoption of means. Besides, finally, if there be any force in the objection, it would militate alike against all the decrees of the Most High, and by proving too much would effect nothing. When the Lord declares, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my

* Luke xi. 9-13.

pleasure," who can rationally infer, that He assigns no province for action to His dependent creatures?

From what has been advanced in this long section, we may perceive in what sense the commonly-received expressions, "the word of truth is the instrument of conveying grace to the soul," "the Spirit never works without the word in renewing the mind," are to be consistently understood; and in what sense also those passages of Holy Writ are to be taken, where a saving change is expressed sometimes without, and at other times in connexion with, the word. Spiritual perceptions of revealed truths are, undoubtedly, by means of that word which reveals them; for every idea implies its appropriate archetype. The thing perceived, however, and the qualification for perceiving it, are not to be confounded. If there be no Divine illumination of the mind, in a direct and immediate manner from the "Father of lights," whereby it is capacitated to discover and to relish the holiness of truth, the demand is reasonable, From what *other* source is that capacity derived? Both revelation and philosophy are here silent. If the direct ray from heaven be excluded, the mind remains in its native darkness, though surrounded with the brightest evidence of truth conceivable.

The "new man," indeed, consisting of new perceptions, judgments, passions, and exercises, is generated by the sovereign will of God in union with the word of truth. And even a Divine *nature*, in one sense of the term, is produced by the promises in the same way. For what is the nature of God but LOVE? Now, in order to possess and improve a Divine nature, consisting in the exercise of love to God and man, the Divine promises must be contemplated and received. By faith we receive, and are transformed by them. The "glory of the Lord" shines in the gospel objectively, and the believing soul is "changed into the same image, from glory to glory." But this is effected, not merely by the object contemplated, but also "by the Spirit of the Lord." And that Spirit dwells, not in the *word*, but in the *mind*. This proposition, "God is love," contains a glorious truth; but it is no more perceived, in a *spiritual* manner, without a predisposing illumination, than this or any other proposition can be discovered as true, in a natural manner, without a physical capacity. God, indeed, is seen in His *own* light, as is the solar orb; but the proposition that reveals Him is only the *means*, the moral or objec-

tive occasion, whereby the perception is excited. And that proposition, however often repeated, or however diversified in phraseology and form, no more conveys to us a spiritual perception of God, without internal illumination qualifying the mind to understand its import, than the bright rays of the sun convey vision to the blind. The light by which we are *enabled* to see the revealed testimony to be a glorious truth proceeds not from the *declaration* concerning God, otherwise no person who understands the terms could remain in spiritual darkness; but this is contrary to decided fact.

I make no apology for insisting so much on this point, because it is of radical importance in theology to have consistent notions respecting the operations of the Holy Spirit on the mind, and because erroneous views of it are often perplexing to serious inquirers after truth and duty; this, also, may justify a few additional attempts to explain and illustrate the same subject. Light in the mind, as an operation of the Spirit, is not an irradiation from an objective truth, however luminous in itself, and however bright it may appear to a person qualified to view it, but is a light created *in* the soul. All illumination of the Spirit is an *internal* influence, and not an external emanation soliciting access through the medium of the senses, the brain, the imagination, or the intellect. To deny this statement is to confound heaven and earth, to identify means and operations, to throw order into confusion, and to set Scripture at variance with itself. How beautifully expressive and explicit, on the present subject, are the words of the apostle Paul:—"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath *shined in our hearts*, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."* Here is evidently included, first, the "light of God" shining in the heart; from which, in connexion with its object, there arises, secondly, "the light of *knowledge*," consisting in a discovery of the glorious perfections of God, displayed in the person and mediation of Jesus Christ.

When Christ says that His "words are *spirit* and *life*," what consistent meaning can be conveyed by these expressions but that His words treated of spiritual and living realities, when He spoke of the necessity of "eating His flesh, and drinking His blood?" The Jews took umbrage at His words, because they understood

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

them literally, and He corrected their mistake by telling them that there was a spirit and life to which He directed their attention. If they would profit by His discourse, they should understand it spiritually, as representing what was necessary to secure the life or well-being of their souls. Where there is a spiritual and living principle in the mind, as the fountain of repentance and faith, the doctrine taught is adapted to nourish it, and to promote its vigour.

Some have represented the entrance of revealed truth into the mind by a lighted candle introduced into a dark room, intending by the comparison to exclude all other illumination. But to those who consider the mental darkness of sinners to consist in a want of spiritual capacity to discern the light of objective truth this representation must appear altogether erroneous. The introduction of light, indeed, will enable those who have good eyes to see both the candle itself and the objects illuminated by it; but what can *this* light do for the blind? It is true the prophetic word is represented "as a light shining in a dark place," but sinful and prejudiced men do not perceive it. The testimony of God is "a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path," but it does not remove blindness, nor has it any adaptation to effect that purpose. Let us, therefore, ascribe to the Holy Scriptures all the excellency that belongs to them, but guard against rejecting or degrading the operations of the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration they were given to us, lest we be found ignorantly "fighting against God." "The spirit of man is the candle [or, lamp] of the Lord;" * but who or what lights it for spiritual purposes? The royal Psalmist replies, "*Thou* wilt light my candle [or, lamp:] the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." † "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." ‡ As if he had said, There are glorious truths in thy revealed testimonies, but except Thou, by Thy Holy Spirit, unveil mine eyes, and remove my sinful incapacity, I shall never be able to behold them to my spiritual comfort and religious profit.

* Prov. xx. 27. † Ps. xviii. 28. ‡ Ps. cxix. 18.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRECEDING VIEWS OF EQUITY AND SOVEREIGNTY DEDUCED FROM THEIR APPLICABILITY TO THE MOST USEFUL PURPOSES IN RELIGION AND MORALS.

SECTION I.

A view of Equity and Sovereignty in reference to a contemplation of the Works of Creation and Providence.

SENTIMENTS are valuable in proportion as they are applicable to useful purposes; that is, according to their tendency to facilitate the acquisition of important knowledge, or to rouse the dormant energies of our nature to practise those things which we know to be right. Let us, therefore, borrowing the aid of the preceding representations of equity and sovereignty, attempt to solve some difficulties which obtrude themselves while contemplating the works of God in creation and providence,—while cultivating personal religion,—while forming our sentiments on controverted subjects in theology,—and while investigating the philosophy of morals.

We begin with the WORKS of God, as displayed in creation and providence,—an ample volume, whose pages are open to all men. Every one, by degrees, however deficient in the powers of reflection, acquires ideas of comparison; and most reflecting minds cannot avoid indulging a wish that they could trace, by a sure clue, the differences of objects and events to their appropriate causes,—particularly, the great and the small, the strong and the weak, the beautiful and the deformed, in creation; the good and the evil, the virtues and the vices of men, in their individual and associate capacities, as events in providence. It is not my design, nor is it necessary, to enter at large into a discussion of these topics, but to

suggest some radical considerations, by way of specimen, in order to assist a contemplative mind in its discursive meditations on the works and ways of the Most High.

I. One of the first things with which the mind is impressed in the assemblage of objects that surround us, is the relative difference of the *great* and the *small*. Man, for instance, compared with the created universe, is an atom; but, compared with a monad, is himself a world. Who can reach, or measure in thought, the utmost extent of this amazing scale! The imagination is lost in wonder when it attempts to approach the extremity at either end. And yet how much more amazing is the distance between absolute infinity and mere nothing! Between these extremes man is a wonderful medium; but he should admit, that he is more nearly allied, with respect to the quantum of existence, as every creature necessarily must be, to the latter than to the former.

Our present business, however, is not so much to contemplate the difference between the great and the small in relation to each other, among the objects of creation, as in reference to the Divine equity and sovereignty. And here we learn, that the smallest creature conceivable—a mere monad—is what it is by sovereign pleasure; for it might not have been at all. When we rise in contemplation to the sum total of *created* existence, we perceive only so many additions made to the scale, as the sole effect of the same sovereign will.

Viewing the scale in the reversed order,—that is, descending,—we are disposed to inquire, Why is this or the other creature so comparatively small? Why is man less than another creature, or an insect less than a man? Here we learn, it is not so accurate to say, Because it is a sovereign appointment, for this reason, that a negation is not an effect of will. For as every portion of created existence is the produce of sovereign pleasure, so the want of any given portion, compared with a greater, is of Divine equity; because more was not its due.

These reflections, attended with a due estimate of ourselves, are well adapted to deepen our humility and to exalt our gratitude. Would man contemplate his greatness, his noble endowments and high destination, compared with the inanimate creation, or the brute part of it? Let him exercise gratitude, and offer praise to that sovereign benevolence which has constituted the bountiful difference. Would he reflect on his littleness, his meanness, com-

pared with other men, or with beings of a superior order, of more exalted capacities, or of enjoyments more felicitating? Let him endeavour to be more unfeignedly humble in the presence of that Being on whom he has no claim for what he has, and much less for what is not conferred upon him.

II. The consideration of the relatively *weak* and *strong* in created objects, claims a similar distinction. The terms are only figuratively applicable to inanimate beings; as to winds and tempests, waves and floods, and all physical causes and effects of every kind. *Strength* expresses power, and the source of it is the Omnipotent, who communicates it to His creatures in different degrees. *Weakness* is the absence of strength, which, as it is not in God, is not communicable to creatures. Strength is an excellency, weakness a defect. Absolute nothing is corresponding weakness; and absolute Being is omnipotence. The intermediate degrees are inconceivably various. In man we behold a medium between a moth and an elephant, a mite and a whale, and, in point of intellect, between a brute and an angel.

But to what shall we ascribe this diversity? Every degree of strength is from sovereign power, which affords to every one the measure he has, from the smallest to the greatest. "Let not the strong man, therefore, glory in his strength," for "what has he that he did not receive?" And let the strength which he possesses be employed in a voluntary concurrence with the will of the Almighty, which never deviates from perfect rectitude. Are we conscious of weakness and infirmities? Let us not impute them to God, as communicated qualities; for He has neither weakness nor infirmity to communicate. They are, strictly speaking, our *own*. If we ask, Why have we them? the true answer is, Because their contraries are not our due. These qualities, nevertheless, though not communicated, stand related to Divine equity; while the power and the strength which we have, and which are communicated, are to be ascribed to sovereign goodness. The former calls for humble acquiescence, the latter for grateful praise.

III. The *beauty* and *deformity* of created objects are not mere creatures of the mind, any more than strength and weakness, though not so easily ascertained. There is, in fact, an absolute beauty, from which all others emanate; though there is no absolute deformity, except we identify with it mere nihility, which is scarcely admissible. The First of beings is absolutely beautiful and glorious;

and, according to His sovereign will, He distributes beauty of every order in the universe He has wisely formed. And as His beauty and glory consist eminently in His holiness, this quality is the most beautiful of which a creature can partake.

In estimating both moral and natural objects, as to their beauty, we are seldom free from the bias of prejudice and the error of caprice. In extreme cases there is but little hazard of mistake, or liability to a diversity of opinion; whether we survey a human person, an animal form, a vegetable production, mineral substances, or the works of art. But in judging of the intermediate degrees of beauty and deformity, much depends on previous associations in the mind, and on the assumed rules of estimation. We are also liable to confound what is beautiful with what is convenient, useful, or estimable, though very different considerations. Thus, in personal attachments, there is a complication of objects: beauty of form, of qualities and endowments, or of general character; and according to previous associations, standards of taste, or views of advantage, different persons will draw different conclusions.

Perfect beauty, whether physical or moral, in a creature, is as impossible as perfect greatness or perfect strength. There can be only different degrees of approximation to the first absolute beauty, whether in the works of nature or in those of art. And deformity, which admits of indefinite degrees, is only the absence of beauty. There is no creature which has not some relative beauty; nor can there be any one which has not some relative deformity. In the works of God, whether of creation or of providence, though there is nothing perfectly beautiful, in comparison of the first beauty, the source and standard of all others, yet there is nothing so deformed but it suits its appointed place, and answers its appropriate use. In this respect, of the Creator it is justly and strictly said, "His work is perfect." But in the works of human art, if we estimate their pretensions by the designed end, the deformity or defect may be so great as to exclude all claim to beauty.

When man contemplates himself and the diversified objects with which he is encompassed, he cannot fail to observe innumerable instances of these opposite qualities; and to an investigating mind it is interesting to seek their respective sources. Of the one, what other ultimate source is conceivable, or strictly speaking possible, but Divine sovereignty? When thought ascends to sovereign goodness and wisdom, power, and will, no perplexing question

remains upon the subject. From the Sovereign Benefactor every species of beauty emanates, to Him it returns, and to Him every voluntary and reflecting agent ought to ascribe it. And the more enlightened, the more spiritual, the more transformed into the Divine similitude the mind is, the more will it be delighted to dwell in meditation on the infinite Original. "For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!"* While "the fashion of this world passeth away," how delightful, how felicitating that OBJECT! Oh that men were wise, that they knew Him better! Then would they love Him supremely, and serve Him with greater cheerfulness: then would their souls rest in Him with unutterable complacency; His presence would solace them in every day of trouble, in every night of sorrow. Instead of the fruitless round of inquiry, "Who will shew us any good?" they would rejoice in Him as their endless portion, "their exceeding great reward."

On the other hand, would we know the source of deformity? It is the same as that of every other defect. And what can this be but a negative principle, consisting in limitation, or the want of ulterior perfection? The Deity is not its *cause*, but it stands *related* to His equity; more than they have, whether of being or of beauty, is not their due. It is vulgarly said of a deformed object, "God has *made* it so." He, indeed is the author of its being, its quantum of greatness, or of strength, its modicum of beauty or comely proportion; but its limitation of being, its comparative smallness and weakness, its *want* of comely proportion and beauty, in a word, its deformity, is of *itself*, its essential insufficiency and absolute dependence. The idea is purely negative, with whatever positive terms it may be clothed. It consists in what sovereign wisdom and power, bounty and pleasure, have *not* done to the object; and its limitation, want, or defect, is founded in universal equity. How profitably humbling the consideration! What a ground of approval and acquiescence in the formation and arrangement of all things! "In wisdom hast Thou made them all," exclaims the devout Psalmist; and what can be greater folly in us than to dispute the decisions of wisdom? All the works of God are wisely appointed "in number, weight, and measure."

It is true, every individual creature *might* have been, as to possibility, greater, more powerful, and more beautiful, because it

* Zech. ix. 17.

stands related to Sovereignty and Omnipotence; and the same observation applies to the aggregate, the universe of created beings. And we may conceive it as very possible, that the reverse of these qualities might have predominated to an indefinite degree, when we regard them as related to Divine equity, which apportions to all their due. Now, this very *possibility* of better and worse in created objects, is a demonstrative proof of a negative principle by which they are limited; and, at the same time, an illustrious display of the Divine perfections of equity and sovereignty.

IV. When we turn our thoughts from the objects of creation to those of *providential* dispensations, one of the first things calculated to arrest our attention, is the mixture of good and evil, of virtue and vice, both in the individual character and in society. Here we behold wealth and poverty, health and sickness, dominion and slavery, peace and war, justice and oppression, truth and falsehood, virtue and vice, happiness and misery, strangely interwoven. Where shall we find a prism to separate, in contemplation, these blended rays? By what means may we be able satisfactorily to refer each quality to its own proper source? To ascribe all indiscriminately to the will of God, is a convenient subterfuge for imbecility or sloth, pride or impatience. On this hypothesis, these attributes themselves must be referred to Him; and He would also be the father of deceit and falsehood, the source of folly, envy, and malice, the patron of impiety and vice.

Nor is the case relieved by transferring the ultimate causation of defects, and crimes, and miseries, from the will of God to the will of men. For is not God the author of human wills? Are they not momentarily supported by Him, and does He not impart to them all their energies? How, then, can the human will be regarded as the *ultimate* source of crimes and woe, without implicating the Creator? Contemplate two national cabinets, of opposite views, planning a campaign; or two armies dealing destruction on each other as enemies. These deeds flow from the wills of the parties engaged, and these derive all their activity and vigour from that supreme will, without which they could have neither efficacy nor existence. Here, where the views are so opposite, and the clashing wills produce effects so tremendous, there must be many crimes and much misery. Now, if there were no defects in men, of prior consideration to the exercise of free-will, and of which God is not the author, they never would act amiss; or if they did,

God would be the ultimate cause of their misdeeds. Those who commit crimes of the greatest magnitude have wills, as effects of Divine and sovereign bounty, as well as the most virtuous, and equal freedom on the part of God; but they are *deficient* as to a benevolent disposition, the love of good, a just estimate of consequences, real wisdom and prudence. But is their deficiency the gift of God? Or is their will the cause of that which perverts it? In all unworthy deeds the free-wills of men are perverted; but by what? Not, surely, by the author and supporter of their wills. By what then? It cannot be by free-will itself, except we can identify cause and effect. The truth is, that equity leaves men possessed of all the defects they have, their negative principles and acquired habits; leaves them to walk in their own ways, permits them to plan, and often to execute, their own schemes, in private or in public, in their individual and associate capacities. In equity they are accountable to the Supreme Governor and Judge, while sovereignty assigns them natural capacities, and providential means of exercising wisdom, that by real virtue they might obtain happiness. They who imagine they have no deficiencies to be supplied, no wants to be relieved, no sins to be pardoned,—who disdain to seek, or to acknowledge the necessity of sovereign influence as the cause of their success, will have degrading thoughts of a "throne of grace," of a Redeemer from sin and misery, of true virtue and religion,—in a word, of Divine equity and sovereignty. To the neglect of infinite wisdom and promises of assisting grace to those who seek according to a divinely-instituted plan, they will choose their *own* way of happiness, and their appropriate reward will be equitably assigned to them.

Amidst all the perplexities and miseries of this world, how consoling the thought that all the follies and perversities, the wrath and oppressions, the cruelties, injustice, and uncharitableness of men, are under the sovereign restraint and control of the Most High! While the vicious are "filled with their own devices," we are assured that "all things work together for good to them that love God." "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over

all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name." The truly pious, though they eat "the bread of adversity," and drink "the water of affliction" and oppression, have abundant inducements to "rejoice evermore:"—"And not only so, but we *glory* in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." To conclude our present reflections: every created object, every providential event, every defect and excellency, all happiness and misery, are distributed by the hand of either sovereignty or equity—our good, by the former; our evil of suffering, by the latter; while the evil of sin is of ourselves. With God, however, "there is forgiveness, that He may be feared; and with Him there is plenteous redemption." Over all the created universe He presides, and governs with indefectible wisdom; and "His tender mercies are over all His works." "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth,"—"Alleluia!"

Section II.

A view of Equity and Sovereignty in reference to Personal Religion.

Every intelligent Christian will allow that those doctrinal principles which have the most direct tendency to generate and improve personal religion obviously recommend themselves as important, and highly deserving of a cordial reception. That knowledge, and that consideration of God and ourselves, which directly tend to excite the believer's holy love, his filial fear, his genuine humility, his absolute resignation, his ardent gratitude, and his lively hope, —that view of God and of ourselves which is best calculated to destroy our enmity, to check our presumption, to subdue our pride, and to control our impatience,—those aspects of the Divine character which inflexibly oppose rebellion, forbid despair, and inspire delight,—in a word, those aspects which ward off perplexity, and induce a cheerful and settled confidence, challenge our highest reverence and esteem. In the Christian character, as in the sacred volume, and in the Divine dispensations, it is pleasing to recognise a beautiful symmetry, in which every part appears to occupy its proper situation, like the parts of a dissected map, without anything either prominently deficient or superfluous. Such, it is apprehended, are the genuine effects of an habitual, devout contemplation of equity and sovereignty, as explained in this essay.

I. Holy *love* is the essence of real virtue, and the sum of Christian holiness. Infinite, sovereign benevolence, habitually contemplated, enkindles the sacred flame; all rising enmity is subdued, and the soul easily embraces with good-will even its bitterest enemies. A desire to imitate, from a just view of rectoral benevolence, forbids the contrary. That view of sovereignty which has been sometimes maintained, which wears a stern aspect, and includes a destructive disposal of its objects, inspires us with dread, rather than with confidential affection. But, to the soul that seeks Him, God is an ocean of light and love. The more we dwell on this blessed object, the more are we "changed into the same image, from glory to glory." Love begets love. "We love

Him, because He first loved us." The command to love such a Being with all our heart is "not grievous, but joyous." And even His equity becomes a pleasing theme, and the object of purest love. His very judgments, which abound in the world, reflect no dishonour upon Him. Though the records of history are full of events which are criminal in themselves, and in their consequences injurious to men, yet the Divine equity is not sullied, but appears to an impartial eye perfectly and unchangeably amiable. The guilty alone are the objects of Divine judgments; and though the "heel of the righteous" may be bruised by them, "their life is hid with Christ in God."

False apprehensions of the Divine character perplex and confound; but accurate views discover a loveliness, a spiritual beauty, which words are inadequate to express. Divine benevolence is wonderfully operative, and inconceivably fruitful. The evangelical charter contains grants of amazing import:—"And this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." * "I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." † Well may Christians exclaim, "What manner of love is this!" "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" This view of Divine benevolence is well adapted to maintain the flame of holy affection; a sovereign God, the infinite source of light, shines in His dispensation of mercy on a benighted world without respect of persons, nor does He place any obstruction in the way by a reprobating decree. The doctrines here taught admit of no appointed bars, no obstacles to be surmounted, in our approach to the God of mercy and love, but our own obstinacy and perverseness, no conceivable hindrance but in ourselves,—nothing but what is properly our *own*, and not in any sense from God. Here we find nothing in Divine sovereignty but what is infinitely amiable and lovely; nor is Divine equity an enemy to any one but the wicked and rebellious. Who but the ignorant and the vicious will fail to love a character so infinitely estimable and attractive?

II. Filial *fear*, which is peculiar to a soul possessed of true piety, consists in an apprehension of power accompanied with be-

* 1 John v. 11. † 2 Cor. vi. 16–18.

nignity. So important is the "fear of the Lord," in the estimation of the inspired writers, that sometimes the *whole* of real religion is represented by that phrase. Infinite majesty and almighty power, viewed as detached from love, may well produce gloomy dread, or a "fear that hath torment;" but sovereign benevolence, united with awful power and equity, and seen through the medium of revealed truth, expel the slavishness of fear, and generate a reverential and filial affection. If in any case we should conceive of sovereign power as of something which differs arbitrarily from supreme equity, rectitude, and holiness, we could never be free from slavish fear, and "a horror of great darkness" would interrupt our purest enjoyments. False associations tarnish the lustre of religion, and corrode our happiness. But if, in fact, our spiritual enjoyments are interrupted, notwithstanding we have right views of the Divine character, we may be sure that then equity, not sovereignty, is operative, and that we suffer nothing more than we deserve. Then is the time for us to inquire, with trembling solicitude, What are we, and what have we done? Then, also, is the time for us to meditate with contrition on the fountain of mercy, the testimonies of God respecting His readiness to forgive the penitent, and the sins which ought to be avoided. Then, moreover, is the time for us to betake ourselves, in the exercise of "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," to the "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness;" to seek, with all seriousness and earnestness of soul, "mercy to pardon and grace to help." Now, we dare not appeal to justice:—"If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?" The only remaining refuge is sovereign mercy:—"But with thee there is forgiveness that thou mayest be *feared*." Now we are again prepared for watchfulness against temptations to sin, for diligent and cheerful obedience. The burden of guilt is removed, faith having "received the atonement;" the defiled conscience is purified by "the blood of the covenant;" "being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and "walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." Thus the principle of holy action is purified and invigorated:—"When thou hast enlarged my heart, I will run in the ways of thy commandments."

Now, it is demanded, what theological principles, except those maintained in this essay, are calculated to favour this process, or to produce this happy result? How can filial fear, or a worship

truly reverential, be promoted by any adverse principles? Let the advocates of the paramount potency of reason, to the exclusion of these doctrines, go to any extent they wish; what can they acquire, what end can they accomplish? Can the cultivation of reason, to the neglect of a sovereign remedy, remove guilt from the conscience? Hardened it may be, but not cleansed; it may be perverted for the admission of a false peace, but not pacified on grounds that will bear examination. Pharisaic pride and Sadducean obstinacy may be easily acquired, with a delusive confidence; but that "fear of the Lord which is clean, enduring for ever," is not to be obtained by that boasted reason which expunges from our creed the equity of Divine government and the sovereignty of Divine grace. They who are so minded and resolved will rush on the perilous experiment; and they shall "reap the fruit of their doings." "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."* Blessed are they who, awakened to self-inquiry, diligently seeking the cause of their ignorance and guilt, and finding it in themselves, mourn and lament,—who flee to the refuge graciously provided in the gospel,—who sincerely desire to avoid not only presumptuous sins, but also secret faults, and who exercise filial fear towards God! But how can this be conceived as possible, without a proper acquaintance with our own real state as related to Him, and with His true character as revealed in His Word—a God, whose justice will "by no means clear the guilty," and whose mercy is to be sought by the way which His wisdom has prescribed?

III. Genuine *humility*, which is absolutely essential to personal religion, consists in a just sense entertained of ourselves, considered as unworthy and dependent, compared with God. As repentance arises from a due consideration of our sinfulness, contrasted with the holiness of God and the perfection of His law, so humility springs from a just comparison of ourselves, considered as creatures, with the self-existent, independent, immutable, and all-sufficient GOD. The essence, existence, and perfections of Jehovah are uncaused, and strictly absolute. No other being can possibly be so. He has neither beginning nor end,—neither actual change, nor a liability to variation. On the contrary, we are de-

* Isa. l. 11.

pendent upon God for every good quality, every moral excellence, every active power, for our existence, and even our very essence. Without Him, we had no *possibility* of existence. He is the sole cause, not only why we are, but also why it was possible for us to be. In Him alone are all our springs and resources of sufficiency, and abstracted from Him we are as NOTHING.

Some may hastily conclude that a proper sense of our delinquency, our sinfulness, and obnoxiousness to punishment, is an essential ingredient as well as an occasion of humility. But this is contrary to acknowledged facts, as well as to the obvious nature of the thing itself; for is it not an allowed fact, that the angels in heaven are as humble as they are holy? Was not humility a robe which perfect Adam wore in Paradise? Was not the spotless Jesus constantly arrayed in it? Yes, and with humility, as a becoming garment, will every creature in the realms of bliss be for ever invested. He who has a deep sense of his original non-existence, his universal and absolute dependence, his constant liableness to revert to his primitive nihility, on the suspension of God's preserving care, is in the same degree humble. But he who imagines he has any degree of goodness, moral or physical, in act or in principle, which is not immediately from God,—who supposes that he has a power of self-preservation in any respect distinct from the operative Divine will, is in the same proportion the subject of ignorance and pride.

If we would be disrobed of the worthless, the odious garment of pride, let us contemplate the true character of God compared with our own. In that perfect mirror, we may see that there is an infinite disparity between the parties, and that God alone is distinctly good. We may see also the true temper of the first perfect Adam, and of the second Adam, who was "meek and lowly in heart;" and there we may behold the profound humility and reverence, together with the consequent unutterable joys, of the celestial myriads. The sole cause why they are blessed and happy is Divine, sovereign benevolence; and the great source of their humility is their comparative nothingness in the balance of perfect equity. The objective means, afforded them as free agents, for their preservation in that blissful condition is a perpetual contemplation of God in His real characters, contrasted with their own; and pleasing wonders, before "hidden from ages and generations," continually unfold themselves to their adoring minds.

IV. There is no suitable, no sufficient inducement for absolute *resignation* to the Divine will, which yet is essential to personal religion, without a firm conviction that "God is love,"—that is, infinite benevolence; and that His perfection of sovereignty is (to the absolute exclusion of an arbitrary power to inflict misery) a right of displaying and conferring that benevolence in one way, or in one degree, rather than another. When we are thoroughly convinced of this glorious truth, the objective evidence of which is abundant, and that a revelation of it, in a way of mercy, is made to mankind, whose condition is deplorable,—when we are assured that offenders, on returning, will be received with compassionate kindness, and that Jesus Christ will not reject the soul that comes to God through His mediation,—when, moreover, we know, from the real nature of Divine equity, that it stands opposed to nothing in us but indulged sin and a rebellious will,—the way appears clear for the most absolute resignation of ourselves to the will of God.

Conscious indulgence of sin indeed, or voluntary rebellion, will prove an injurious bar; but what can be more equitable? In fact, the supposition of a rebel, continuing such, exercising absolute resignation, is contradictory. But such is the wonderful, the endearing character of God, and such the harmony of His perfections, the soul which is conscious it has no allowed guile, no fostered aversion, may commit itself, without reserve and without fear, into the arms of infinite benevolence, in undismayed expectation of all the happiness it needs, both present and future. To him who regards justice as wearing the aspect of arbitrary severity, or sovereignty as including a power of inflicting misery without desert, however valuable may be his other sentiments, self-dedication will be more a painful task than a pleasing exercise. But to an enlightened believer, no act of devotion is more delightful. By him, God is viewed as an almighty Father and Friend, who rejects no returning sinner, but "loadeth him with benefits." For though "God shall wound the head of His enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses," yet the humble believer in Jesus comes boldly, that is, with resigned confidence, to "the throne of grace."

V. *Gratitude* is a temper of mind which denotes a desire of acknowledging the receipt of a benefit. The mind which does not so feel is not as it ought to be; but one rightly disposed is ardent

in gratitude in proportion to the benefit received. When the apostle Paul says of the heathen, "neither were they thankful," he seems to mark the sin of ingratitude as peculiarly odious. And, indeed, this was the view which the wiser among themselves professed to take of that vice, without, alas! feeling the conviction that thereby they were self-condemned. But this unworthy temper is not confined to heathens; on the contrary, how common among professed Christians, and to what an awful extent! What benefactor like God, especially as represented in the Christian system! What benefactor so great, so good, so bountiful, so constant, and so disinterested! But where are the returns of gratitude? How few utter from the heart these words, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits;" "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me!"—sentiments and feelings no less rational than devout.

Like every other grace which is required of us, virtuous gratitude depends, in part, on a right apprehension and estimate of its appropriate object. A right view of benefits received, of the source whence they flow, and of our own demerit, has a direct tendency to excite our gratitude; and while the mind is virtuously disposed, this will be the pleasing effect—a sacrifice acceptable to the Benefactor, and delightful to him that offers it. Now, what views of God have the most direct tendency to excite and cherish gratitude? Not those which regard Him as all benevolence, without justice; nor those which represent Him all justice, including rectitude and general goodness, without sovereign benevolence. The gratitude of the former, if grateful at all, must be very limited and feeble; for, having no great sense of their own demerit, for want of a standard by which to estimate their condition, one powerful motive to gratitude is neglected. And the tribute of the latter must be equally defective, while they reject the sovereignty with which God confers His benefits; it degenerates into a feeling, if any grateful feelings remain, resembling what they have on partaking of a common boon for which they are not under any peculiar obligation.

The devout Christian, however, under the influence of consistent principles, surveys the sovereign benevolence of the Supreme Benefactor in every person, in every object, in every quality, and in every event. When he views the starry heaven, and beholds how "one star differs from another star in glory;" when he ploughs

the mighty waters, and considers how they are peopled, and how astonishing is the scale of animal existence, from the bulky whale to the microscopic animalcule; when he traverses the mountain and the forest, crosses the field and the meadow, or walks in the lawn and in the garden; when he visits the city, and observes the commercial, the political, and the military crowd, or mingles with the devout assembly paying the homage of religious adoration,—in all places and circumstances the Divine sovereign benevolence forces itself on every sense, and pervades his grateful heart. Nor does the pleasing emotion forsake him when he enters the chambers of poverty and distress, the cell of a guilty prisoner, or the solemn place of execution. Compassion to the suffering classes of mankind does not extinguish, indeed has no tendency to extinguish, the flame of gratitude to that sovereign God who makes one to partake of His benefits more liberally than others; while Divine equity guards, with never-failing exactness and impartiality, every person and every percipient nature, so that not the smallest conceivable measure of suffering is experienced which is not their *due* in the strictest sense.

When spiritually-minded Christians, whose views are corrected by the genuine doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, are led to contemplate the world of spirits, future punishments and rewards, the regions of despair and the mansions of the blessed, they are disposed to say, as "the words of truth and soberness," Why are we, who are great sinners, not "tormented in those flames?" Why are not we the deathless fuel of consuming fire? Why are not we the prey of a never-dying worm? As our sins have deserved it, why are we not reserved for "the blackness of darkness for ever?" On the contrary, why should mansions of blessedness, "an eternal weight of glory," await us rather than others? Why, thou God of our salvation, were we made to "know the joyful sound" of the gospel, and to "walk in the light of Thy countenance?" Why made the subjects of a "hope that maketh not ashamed," a hope full of immortal prospects? "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Behold, Christians, the oil for your lamps, by which the flame of your gratitude may be for ever fed! Feeling the sacred theme, unfeignedly humble, and tenderly grateful, exclaim,—for "praise is comely for the upright,"—Glory, everlasting glory, "to Him that sitteth on the

throne" of sovereign grace, and whose government is founded in equity unimpeached! Glory to "the Lamb that was slain," who has redeemed us from every curse, from sin and hell, from the power of all our enemies,—who has "redeemed us to God by His own blood," and has "given us the earnest of the Spirit," and the "promise of eternal inheritance!" Alleluia! Transport, the transport of gratitude, is *reason* here.

VI. Let us now attend, finally, to the Christian's more calm and settled enjoyments. A sovereign God has provided for him a foundation well adapted to support his faith and hope in all seasons. As an "heir of promise," he has a ground of "strong consolation"—a consolation firm and lasting, because founded in "oaths, and promises, and blood." Building on this foundation, he may obtain a "full assurance" of faith, of hope, and of understanding. Of faith, from a testimony which is infallible; of hope, because "faithful is He that promised;" and of understanding, because the attributes and dispensations of God are known in their harmonious tendency. But how can these blessings be enjoyed, except on the supposition, that there is no sovereignty in God but what is properly and strictly benevolent, whereby is absolutely excluded the right of inflicting evil without desert? We could not depend on even the most explicit promise, if mere *will* be the standard of right and wrong. To extend the right of sovereignty beyond the manner and degree of distributing benefits, is the same as to establish a right to do wrong, or to confound the terms sovereignty and injustice.

By the evidence derived from a clear notion of the Divine character, the timid soul is relieved from all its painful fears, in the same degree that it feels a consciousness of its own freedom from hypocrisy or insincerity in its approach to God. Knowing that his "heart condemns him not," and that God is unchangeable love, the Christian's consolation is firm, his hopes are lively, and his assurance is infallible. An assurance of interest, indeed, "the new name on the white stone," may not be so legible; but this does not deprive him of the "full assurance of faith and of hope." Thus "rooted and grounded in love," and possessing "faith of the operation of God," the Christian may say with the ancient Church, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord

Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."*

Then may the Christian say, My enmity is slain; for I see God as infinitely loving and equitable. My presumption is checked; for justice forbids it. My pride is subdued; for all I have, and hope to have, is of sovereign grace. My impatience is controlled; for "the Judge of all the earth will do right." "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." "Judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it." What plea can rebellion urge, in the face of love and justice? What room is left for despair, but in the breast of the wilful offender? If a spiritual and rational delight be our portion, either in this or a future state, it must be derived from an apprehension of that character of the Great Supreme which has been represented. This representation, feelingly contemplated, will serve as a clue to guide the soul out of every labyrinth, to extricate the passions out of painful perplexities, and to avoid snares the most dangerous. And, finally, by the salutary aid of such principles, not only a contemplation of the works and ways of God, and personal religion, become more interesting, but also scriptural theology and moral science will appear delightfully harmonious, while they mutually assist and confirm each other.

* Isa. xii. 1.

Section III.

A view of Equity and Sovereignty in reference to Theological Controversies.

Just views of equity and sovereignty, and of the primary truths which flow from them, are of great importance in appreciating the merits of theological systems, and in adjusting a great number of subordinate controverted points. A full examination of such points and systems of doctrine does not comport with the leading design of this work, which is rather to establish general principles, and to shew, in a brief manner, their applicability to a variety of subjects. I shall here notice only a few heads of controversy, by way of specimen.*

I. Some controversies have their origin in the different views which are taken of the *Divine laws*. Every law of God, whether moral or positive, is founded in His equitable government. Whatever sentiments, therefore, tend to subvert obedience to these laws, are levelled against the authority and will of the Supreme Governor. Opposition to the continued authority of the *moral* law has been made on very different grounds and pretences; but no argument, no topic,—not even that of sovereign grace, or Divine influence, or Christian liberty,—can set aside our obligation of conformity to this law; because the sovereignty of Divine grace does not, nor can it from the nature of things, relax or alter the equity of Divine government. But more particularly—

First, The *Antinomian* opposes the moral law and government of God; and holds, that grace in our hearts removes from us the authority of this law, and, of course, our obligation of conformity to its commands. What is this, in effect, but to maintain that sovereign grace and moral government are incompatible? Those who are not decreed to be saved, the Antinomians allow, are under the government of the moral law; but those who are decreed to be saved by grace are not. The perfections of equity and sovereignty they acknowledge are exercised towards different persons, but not

* If life and health be spared, and "if the Lord will," it is my purpose to examine in detail a variety of theological sentiments in a separate form.

towards the same persons. The elect, say they, ought not to be threatened, and the non-elect ought not to be invited to believe. Thus they make what God has not revealed, and what it is impossible for us to know, the rule of our conduct! Instead of appealing to "the law and the testimony," they appeal to the book of the Divine decrees, as the sole standard of human actions. But it has been shewn, in the former part of this work, that every man, without exception, is at once free and passive: as free, he is unavoidably the subject of moral government founded in equity; as passive, an object on whom are conferred different degrees of goodness or grace flowing from sovereignty. Now, to give the least colour of consistency to their scheme, they ought to shew that the elect are not free, not moral agents, but merely the passive recipients of Divine grace. Thus, in fact, they endeavour to subvert, in various ways, essential characters and relations both in God and in man.

It is true, St Paul asserts of Christians, that they are "not under the law, but under grace." And this is a glorious truth in several respects. They are not under the *curse* of the law; because their Surety, to whom they are united, bore its curse for them. They are not under the moral law as a *covenant;* for Christ, by His perfect obedience, fulfilled its conditions, and they are interested in Him as their federal head and representative. They are not under the Mosaic law, consisting of moral and positive precepts, as a *covenant of peculiarity,* which was binding upon the Jews for a limited time. But neither these, nor any other considerations, can free believers from the obligation of obedience and conformity to the moral law as a rule of rectitude, without absurdly supposing, either that the Moral Governor may be dethroned, or that His human subjects may be deprived of their humanity.

When an Antinomian hears the phrase, "the law is a rule of life," he attends more to the sound of words, than to the truth of ideas and the intended meaning; for, either wilfully or ignorantly, he exclaims, What *legality!* Legal, indeed, would be the teacher who intended by it that our obedience to the moral law may be of such a nature as to *entitle* us to eternal life, as a substitute for the righteousness of the Saviour. To such teachers we may suitably apply the castigatory remark of the apostle:—"They know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm." The same apostle says, "The

law is good, if a man use it lawfully." A covenant of life it cannot be to any man in his degenerate, or even his renewed state; but a rule of rectitude, by which our life and conduct should be governed, it must be, both on earth and in heaven. For no creature *can* be exempt from obligation of obedience to the Moral Governor, without destroying the essential character both of the Governor and the governed.

Secondly, The *Hyper-Calvinist* maintains, that the sacrifice of Christ was, in no respect, a price of redemption, except for the elect exclusively; and that there is no Divine law which requires *any* one to believe that Christ died *for him.* This was not the sentiment of Calvin, as before shewn, and therefore it may be denominated *Hyper*-Calvinian. The sanction of a great name, however, or the want of such a sanction, is of little moment; the primary consideration should be, What is consistent with the uniform tenor of Divine revelation? The greatest of uninspired men have sometimes deviated from the narrow path of truth, and all are liable to deviate, through the remains of prejudice and the want of closer search under the teachings of celestial wisdom. If the sentiment under present notice be strictly analysed, we shall probably find that a part of it, I mean the part of exclusion, has no more foundation in truth than Calvin's inference, from the decree of predestination to life, that there must be a decree of reprobation. But, as his inference was not fairly drawn, or drawn from a false principle, that "certain prescience implies a decree" of the evil as well as of the good; so a price of redemption, and the actual deliverance of some as the effect of it, is not a sufficient basis for the inference, that all others who are not actually and eventually delivered were excluded by a decree from all personal relation to the one great sacrifice for sin, and from an obligation to believe, on the authority of a Divine law, that Christ died *for them.*

The Hyper-Calvinist is ever urging such considerations as these, If Christ died *for* all, how could any be lost? If God *designed* the death of Christ to be a ransom for all, why are not all saved? Can His design be frustrated? If all were redeemed with a price, then all must be redeemed by power; for how can these be separated? If the term *all* be not restricted to some of all sorts, how can the design agree with the event? And if Christ died not for all individually, what Divine law can require them to

believe it? These, and a variety of arguments, rather objections, of the same kind, overlook the true state of the question, or at least a clear definition of the terms and the thing intended. Wherein do such hypothetical questions differ, in effect, from the following:—If the diurnal luminary was made to shine *for* all, how could any be without its light? If it was *designed* for all, how could the Creator's design be frustrated? If all have an objective means of seeing the sun, how can this be separated from actually seeing it? If the term *all* be not restricted to some of all ages and countries, how can the supposed design of creating the sun correspond with the fact of numbers *not* seeing it? It is replied, that the fact of the sun being designed to shine at all implies *another* design of the Creator—viz., that there would be created percipient beings who should actually enjoy his light. But this design of certain enjoyment to some, as a primary reason of existing light, has no influence to restrict the other more general design. In like manner, Christ being designed as a sacrifice for sin at all implies that some would be formed spiritually to enjoy the benefit; otherwise He would have been "set forth as a propitiation" without wisdom. Nay, this may be considered as the *primary* reason why He died at all. But this more specific design, without which He would not have been made a sin-offering, has no influence to restrict another more general design. For what conceivable tendency has the one to limit the other? Let the special design of God, by the death of Christ to save some, be considered as an established fact; the question is, What aptitude is there in this fact to limit another design of a more general nature, founded on the *same* sacrifice, but extended to *other* objects?

The truth is, that the Hyper-Calvinist does not distinguish between the design of God, in the character of a moral governor, respecting the subjects of His government as such; and His design as a sovereign benefactor in relation to His creatures in their passive capacity. In the character of a moral governor, He "has no respect of persons," but deals with all alike as free and accountable, affords the same objective means, the same ground of hope, the same inducements for believing and repenting, and exhibits the same blessings, and the same meritorious medium. But in the character of a sovereign benefactor, He has a more select design, which is that of an actual imputation of the meri-

torious sacrifice to those whom He has destined to be mystically united to that great High Priest who has offered it to satisfy law and justice. The sovereign purpose is thus unfolded by the event, which to mortals is the only index of such gracious and specific intention. So that predestinating love and mercy are not known except by *inference* from the actual mystical union; and this by its effects, appearing in the spirit and exercise of faith, a renovation of mind and habits, a reformation of conduct and pursuits. No such fruit can be conceived to proceed from anything short of Divine energy, and consequently an eternal purpose. To begin with inquiring, *à priori*, who are probably the objects of electing love, is an unprofitable, a delusive, and a dangerous process. It draws away the mind from a plain and immediate duty, and directs it to the Divine *arcana*, which must be for ever and necessarily inscrutable to finite minds, except as they are disclosed by the event, or by some special revelation which no one is authorised to expect.

Now, from the design of the Moral Governor in making the great sacrifice a basis for *exhortations* to repent, and to believe that there is "forgiveness with God," it follows that the Hyper-Calvinist is wrong in supposing there is no Divine law to oblige a sinner to believe that Christ died *for him*. It is generally added, indeed, "for him *in particular;*" but this is nothing to the purpose, for a particular specification has no reference to the laws of moral government, and therefore can be no rule of duty. The question is, Whether Divine law requires us, as sinners indefinitely and without exception, to believe that the death of Christ is a moral mean exhibited for an inducement to faith and repentance? If this be the case, then it is the duty of every one to submit to this law, to believe and obey it, and to acknowledge that Christ in this respect died *for him*. It must be observed, however, that no one has a right to determine the safety of his *state* because he admits this general proposition, "Christ has died for me;" for the requisitions of the Moral Governor extend to a cordial reception of the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ by a faith which unites the soul to Him, and submits to His authority. Obedience to one command, or part of a law, does not exempt the subject of it from obedience to the other. The one ought to be done, and the other not left undone. That Christ "died for our sins,"—"gave Himself for us,"—"was delivered for

our offences,"—"bore our sins in His own body on the tree,"—"suffered the just for the unjust, to bring us to God,"—"gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified,"—are *direct* objects of faith, and which on Divine authority we are *required* to believe. But that Christ died for this or that person *in particular*, with a sovereign peculiarity of design, is no object of faith at all, except he had a special revelation for that purpose; it is rather an *inference* from the fruits of believing, which reason draws by means of consciousness. If I am conscious of possessing the scriptural marks and genuine effects of a saving interest in Christ, I may then, but not before, *infer* that He died for me *in particular*, according to a sovereign speciality of design in my favour.

Thirdly, The *Neonomian* contends that the gospel is a *new law;* a law, mild, easy, and remedial, compared with the more rigid and inflexible moral standard. The term, indeed, which was much in use about a century ago, is now seldom heard; but the sentiment which it was intended to express is, perhaps, more prevalent than ever. It is, by great numbers, constantly advanced from the pulpit and the press. Its advocates imagine that *sincerity* stands instead of personal perfection,—that faith and repentance are easy substitutes for universal conformity to the moral law,—and that "our imperfect obedience" is a mild and remedial way of acceptance with God, under the gospel dispensation, in lieu of the more harsh and severe demands of the original law as a covenant; and thus prove how imperfect is their knowledge both of law and gospel. Their error consists chiefly in their putting good things in wrong places, and for unauthorised uses. They seem to "go about to establish their own righteousness" in a new method, that is, by a new law.

It is natural to ask, Were not repentance, and faith, and sincerity, required under *every* dispensation of revealed religion? Was not every true believer, like Abraham, *always* accepted? Was not every sincere penitent, as well as David, the subject of pardon, in *all* ages? How, then, can the gospel be a remedial law, as contradistinguished from all preceding modes of acceptance? The truth is, that the gospel points out no method essentially different from what is contained in the Old Testament; but only unfolds the promises, and points out their objects in a clearer light. The same "righteousness of God" was the object of faith; the same Divine mercy, through the very same medium, was the

source of forgiveness; and the same exercise of faith and repentance, in *sincerity*, was demanded through every period. The moral law is as much in force now as it was in the days of David, or Moses, or Abraham, or Methuselah. And the way of acceptance with God is precisely the same now as in any preceding age. How, then, can the Neonomians adopt the sentiment, that the gospel is a remedial, a more easy law? The cause of their singular conclusion is, that they do not distinguish between the moral law as a rule, and as a covenant. In the latter sense, it was never enacted since the first transgression; and in the former, it has always been, and ever will be in force. The claims of the Moral Governor are uniformly the same, as far as this law is concerned; but the gospel discovers clearly how a sinner may be delivered from the curse of a broken covenant. By a sovereign appointment, its federal claims are abrogated with regard to all those who receive the second Adam; because He has fulfilled it as a covenant, and is therefore "the Lord our righteousness." A personal interest in Him answers all federal demands; but the obligation to a moral rule remains unaltered. It still requires us to credit all that God testifies, to cast away our hostility by repentance, and to obey whatever He commands with sincerity. The hope of forgiveness, indeed, it does not propose; this is done only by a gracious promise, a stream that flows in another, a sovereign channel.

The Mosaic law, considered as a covenant of peculiarity to the Jews, as subservient to the Messiah's advent, and which was for ages a galling yoke, though a wise and necessary appointment, has been removed by the gospel; which, in this respect, is an easy yoke and a light burden. But this is not abrogating the moral law; it is only removing some positive rites, burdensome to the observer of them, which were blended with it: the use of their original institution being accomplished, their obligation ceased of course, though it was difficult to induce Pharisaic spirits to relinquish their observance, and to dissuade them from the hope of obtaining righteousness and acceptance with God in that way. The Neonomian scheme is only Pharisaism in a new form,—a mode of obtaining righteousness by an easy instead of a hard *work*. Righteousness always has been to fallen man, as it is now, of *grace*, and not of works; while obligation of compliance with Divine prescriptions arises from the moral law. Righteousness and life are exhibited as the gifts of sovereign bounty, and in the gospel

shine with unclouded lustre; and the terms proposed on which we may expect to obtain these blessings are founded in the equity of Divine government. Thus, both the Antinomian and the Neonomian hypotheses are alike subverted in the mind of the intelligent Christian by a due consideration of the same general principles of equity and sovereignty, and their genuine operations in the Divine plans of government and grace. Without sovereign grace there cannot be any righteousness or salvation; and without equitable requisitions there can be no moral government.

Fourthly, The *Antipædobaptist* excludes infants from being intended in the law of baptism, pleading that this law is *entirely positive*, and that a subject not *expressly* specified must of course be excepted. He does not seem to reflect that the distinction between *moral* and *positive*, with respect to laws, is a mere *nominal* species, attended indeed with some advantage, but very liable to be abused. Thus the distinctions, great and small, strong and weak, beautiful and deformed, old and young, learned and illiterate, and a thousand more, in the provinces of nature and of science, though useful in many respects, are all nominal, as founded in comparative relations, and not admitting of any *absolute point* of difference. The common definition of a positive law is, "A law the reason of which we do not perceive, and which is enacted by the sole authority of the lawgiver." But such definitions, if they deserve that appellation, point out no *essential* difference, but rest on a fluctuating base,—that of our comparative *reason* and *perception*, which are merely nominal and relative,—rather than real differences founded in the nature of things. According to this, or any similar definition, a little more perception of the reason of the law would alter its essential character! The truth is, and it arises from the definition itself, that the same law may be positive in some respects, or to some degree, but not in another. And such, the Antipædobaptist must concede, if he will but properly reflect upon the nature of the subject, is the law of baptism enacted by the Christian Legislator. Though antecedently no one had a right to assume what specific laws He would enact, yet in the law of baptism we may *perceive* a good *reason* and a peculiar fitness in the including of infants with their parents.

It is observable, that the *inference* of exclusion is deduced, not from the nature of the case, but from the arbitrary, imperfect definition, which expresses no real and essential difference. The

Divine Legislator says to His ministers, "Go, disciple all nations, baptizing them." How is it possible to understand the import of this or of any other law without attending to the state of things prior to the time of its promulgation and the circumstances of the case? The infant offspring of professing parents had always been included in their privileges; on what principle, then, are they to be *excepted* in the present case without an *express* declaration for that purpose? The Antipædobaptist replies, The law of baptism is *entirely positive*, and *therefore* what is not verbally expressed ought not to be included. What is this but arguing in a circle on a false assumption? The Pædobaptist, on the other hand, maintains, not from an arbitrary assumption, but from the nature of the case, that the law of baptism is *not* entirely positive,—that infants had been, and were at the time, included in the privileges of their parents,—that the law itself does not exclude them either explicitly or by implication,—and therefore the law of baptism *does* embrace them.

Religious privileges, though external and relative, are sovereign grants, and it behoves parents and ministers to reflect on what authority they *revoke* them, and who requires this at their hands. They should have more weighty reasons than those which are founded on arbitrary definitions of terms, or a doubtful inference from supposed silence. What evidence is there in the apostles' practice that they *excluded* infants from the relative privileges of their parents? By sovereign favour they were once included; where is the *Divine* law that now debars them? In vain we look into the law of baptism, or to apostolic practice, for any exclusive clause, or any unfavourable token.

God's covenant of grace respecting fallen man is the fruit of Divine sovereignty; but its external administration stands related to His equitable government. The law of baptism is an instrument of moral administration, a sign of spiritual blessings, and a confirming token, or sealing certainty, of the Christian covenant in its outward form. To suppose, as the Antipædobaptist does, that a participation of the thing signified is the *rule* for administering the sign, is to make a thing unknown, and to us unknowable, the standard of our judgment. That the Divine Lawgiver should *require* of adults a profession of their faith, repentance, and obedience, is perfectly equitable; because they are capable of the contrary, and were previously found in an adverse state of disobedience, impenitence, and unbelief. But to make a profession

universally necessary, to the exclusion of infants, who are incapable of the *contrary* profession, is to limit "the Holy One of Israel," —to exclude the lambs of His flock from the fold of His visible Church, because they cannot express their relation to Him,—or to make the procedure of sovereign grace, in the mode of dispensing its benefits to mankind, the rule of our conduct. Wherein does this, virtually, differ from that exploded doctrine which makes the Divine decrees the rule of human actions? In a word, it confounds the essentially different provinces of sovereignty in the communication of grace, and equity in the administration of laws.

Fifthly, There are many professors of Christianity in the present day, who, in point of denomination, have been hitherto *nondescripts;* but who, for the sake of distinction, and to prevent circumlocutions, may be named, (I hope without offence, for none is really intended,) *Contractionists;* because they contract and limit the apostolic precepts and examples, by reducing them unjustifiably to *positive laws.* Their general view of positive laws coincides with that of the Antipædobaptists; but they differ as to their *number:* making weekly communion, the kiss of charity, mutual public exhortations, a free ministry, and almost every particular practised and observed in the churches founded by the apostles, to be of *positive* institution. When they can ascertain what customs and rites were in use under the direction of the first ministers of Christ, they take it for granted that the same *ought* to be literally followed by all other Christian churches. The propriety of such an inference they do not seem to suspect. They do not inquire so much into the moral design and evangelical end of those rites and customs, and how the *spirit* of them may be observed with most advantage in different ages and situations, as into the bare *facts* themselves; and conclude, that Christian faithfulness consists in a close imitation of the letter and external mode. Some of them, indeed, admit of Christian forbearance towards others who cannot see precisely with them in all points; but others are less accommodating, and make any one point of difference in the observance of these supposed positive laws a sufficient ground of exclusion from their church. Their chief controversy with other Christians and among themselves is about external order, the mode of worship and discipline; in brief, about what others call the circumstantials of religion: the natural effects of which are perpetual divisions and disputes. While they adhere to a false and fickle

rule of interpretation, it is natural to expect that their inquiries will terminate in different results. Were they all of one mind at any given period, there is no probability that they could long agree together in the same society. They seem to subvert the order of the gospel by the very mode of attempting to establish that order; which is by rendering the end subservient to the means, instead of making the means subservient to the end. Assuming, as they do, that faithfulness to the Divine Lawgiver consists in a firm adherence to a literal imitation of New Testament customs, whatever becomes of the spiritual design of them, and that "every pin of the tabernacle is precious" in their sense, it would be wonderful indeed if, as to their order and discipline, they continued long "at one stay."

It is not denied, that persons of real piety may be found gliding into these notions, by the inadvertent adoption of an unauthorised rule of interpreting the Scriptures. But they would do well to consider what is the nature of a Christian church. Is it not a voluntary society of Christians, founded on the grand *design* of the apostolic churches? Whatever body of Christians, therefore, voluntarily associated, best comports with this design, is the most apostolic church. The apostles, and the Spirit of Christ in them, took men, customs, and circumstances, as they found them, as is manifest from their epistles, directing their efforts to the advancement of spiritual Christianity. Whatever was calculated, though in different modes, most effectually to promote the glory of God, the triumphs of the Saviour's grace, the extension of His cause, and the power of religion in the souls of men, they recommended and urged, and approved of in others. This, indeed, is implied in their having a fixed, ultimate end in view, to which everything was made subservient. If this design was not likely to be answered, however literal the imitation, and however conscientious the parties, there was a defect; and any variation from what they had sanctioned in other circumstances, provided that variation tended more effectually to secure the proposed higher end, must consistently have been approved by them. They did not, under Divine inspiration, however infallible, prescribe positive laws or usages in the churches, as if the observance of them were a test of faithfulness in addition to their moral aptitude; but as helps to promote the highest effects of Christianity, according to the circumstances of time, place, and previous customs. "I became all things to all

men, if by any means I might gain some." To do "all things decently and in order" has a direct tendency to glorify God, and to advance His cause; but to suppose that no two societies can do this without a punctilious conformity to the church of Jerusalem, Corinth, Rome, or Ephesus, or to one another, is contrary to fact, and absurd in theory. Those Mosaic rites which required an exact observance were appointed for a peculiar end; but rites and customs in a church of Christ are of the nature of moral means to promote one general design.

It may be asked, Will not this leave men too much at liberty to form *unscriptural* rules? I reply, nothing can be unscriptural which in the most direct and effectual manner promotes the end for which Christian churches were instituted. The first inquiry of a congregated religious body should be, How may this end be best attained under the corrective rules of the New Testament? Against those who succeed "there is no law." They who contend stiffly for the literal imitation, and are contentious about the manner for its own sake, discover too much of the Pharisaic spirit, and overlook the end of all regulations. It may be useful to consider whether it be not the spirit of initial Popery, though without coercion, operating on a smaller scale, in which positive laws are multiplied, supposed to be founded on apostolic practice, while the spirit of religion and the grand design of Christianity are cast into the shade.

These *Contractionists*, while they profess universal subjection to the legislative authority of Jesus Christ, form laws of their own in His name; that is, make those to be *positive* which He has not made so,—endeavour to confine the spirit and intent of His laws to one literal channel,—limit the generous, vigorous, and expansive operations of sovereign grace to a narrow nook of their own formation,—and manifest a lamentable want of candour and equity towards those who do not follow their steps. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," and those who are under His influence, and who understand the sublime end of the gospel, will not be confined to the contracted bounds thus prescribed to them, in which they must glorify God, by men who mistake the nature of positive laws, and assume an unsanctioned rule of explaining Scripture. The authority of Christ in His Church is indeed paramount; in this, there is no supposed difference. But the question is, By what mode of interpretation are we to ascertain that autho-

rity? Not by riveting our attention to words and syllables, nor by critically comparing terms and phrases merely,—though this is not to be neglected,—but chiefly by observing the various and unfettered manner in which inspired men adopted means to prosecute the holy end of their engagements. They rose superior to external niceties, nor would they form any shackles whereby our progress might be retarded in pursuing the same end—the glory of God our Saviour, and the salvation of men. It might be profitable occasionally to reflect how a primitive minister or Christian, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," would act in this or that situation among us? Doubtless he would pity and reprove the *Contractionist*, and direct him to seek more of "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,"—to be "zealously affected in a good cause," in every noble design whereby a tribute of praise might be paid to his Divine Master,—and "to endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory,"—to engage heartily in every scheme of usefulness within his reach, suggested by the word and providence of God,—to contemplate with judgment, and pursue with ardour, the exalted end for the sake of which all occasional directions were given, and to which all peculiar exemplifications were subservient.

II. A great number of controversies originate in the different views which are taken of *human depravity*. As is the settled opinion of any one on this point, so will be his whole scheme of divinity. Those who take opposite sides, so radical is the subject, must unavoidably, in order to be consistent, have their system of other doctrines in opposition. They cannot possibly have the same views of the Divine purposes, of scriptural predestination and election, of the covenant of grace, of the righteousness and person of Christ, and consequently of Divine personalities; they must have different sentiments on the operations of the Spirit of God,—on the nature of Christian graces, faith, repentance, and love, —on regeneration, conversion, and justification,—and on nearly the whole compass of the Arminian controversy. Of the truth of this remark, Pelagius and Celestius of old, and Dr Whitby and Dr Taylor of late, were fully aware. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to a Christian divine to have accurate views of this doctrine.

First, Some regard human nature as *not at all* depraved.

Though they allow that individual persons corrupt themselves by transgression, yet this does not infect their nature, or alter the power of their free-will; so that they are always able to practise virtue, please God, resist temptation, and keep the Divine laws. The first person of any note who agitated a controversy in the Christian Church on this point was Pelagius, in connexion with his active coadjutor Celestius, about the beginning of the fifth century. But it should be remembered, that the sentiment itself was not novel at that time in the world; it was common enough in every age, as well in the schools of philosophy as among the thoughtless, gay, and profane heathens. But it was certainly considered to be a new doctrine in the Christian Church at this time. Probably some crude and unguarded statements of original sin afforded the immediate occasion. Origen had expressed some strong intimations to the same effect, and had, most likely, found them scattered among the writings of the Platonists, the Aristotelians, and the Stoics: to which we may add, that some of the unbelieving Jews appear to have held similar sentiments. No distinct sect at present avows the name of Pelagius, but the principles maintained and propagated by him are often found among different denominations of professing Christians in all parts of the world, and particularly in our own country, both in the National Church and out of it. It is the common doctrine of declared infidels, of the general body of modern Unitarians, and of some others in different denominations.

He is a Pelagian, in whatever communion of professing Christians he may be found, who holds that human nature is not depraved; that the death of mankind is not the consequence of sin; that free-will, and not any grace, is the source of all virtue; that the sin of the first man affected only himself; that mankind have always had full power to keep the law of God, and need no Divine influence to aid them for holy living; that scriptural predestination to life, or election, is founded on foreseen obedience; that efficacious grace, and the previous influence of the Holy Spirit, are inconsistent with free-will; that man obtains justification, or pardon and acceptance with God, not of grace, not through the merit of Christ, but by that of good works performed in our own strength. Pelagius further held, "that for us to be men is of God, but that for us to be righteous is of ourselves;" that salvation might be obtained three ways—by the law of nature, by the

law of Moses, and by the law of Christ; that actual sinless perfection is attainable in this life; that the good works of heathens, without any gracious assistance, but performed in their own strength, were truly good and acceptable to God; and, finally, that since the conversion of infidels and their perseverance in goodness are works of their own natural power, there is no need of praying for them.

These dogmas, it is true, are sufficiently congenial with human pride; they flatter our vanity, and raise us to greatness in our own esteem. But it is truly marvellous, how Christian divines, so called, could have ventured upon the adoption of notions so glaringly opposite to both the spirit and the letter of the Christian Scriptures. If a new-born infant be as free from a depraved nature as Adam before he transgressed, he does not receive the kingdom of heaven as the gift of Christ,—he needs no regeneration of any kind,—he requires not to be brought to Christ for His efficacious blessing. Besides, if human nature is not depraved in some sense, how is it that mankind so universally deprave themselves? If all the trees be naturally good, how comes it to pass that not one tree is found without bad fruit? How is it that children, as universal experience proves, are so prone to follow bad examples, and so backward to imitate good ones? Surely there must be some defect, some want of a virtuous principle, in order to account for these incontrovertible facts. However critics may dispute about the meaning of Scripture, and especially the apostolic writings, plain facts cannot be disputed. There is no effect without a cause. Let a Pelagian, on his principles, if he can, account for any one sin. He knows not the true origin of any; how, then, should he account for millions of transgressions? Were he humble and modest enough, he might know the real cause of all sin, the origin of all evil; but his pride of understanding will not allow him. He will sooner plunge into endless absurdities, and the most palpable contradictions.

Secondly, Some regard human nature as *partially* depraved. Among professing Christians, who pay some deference to the declarations of Holy Writ, this is the more common sentiment. They justly reflect, that to embrace the Pelagian sentiment in its full extent, would be to rush blindfold against the dictates of reason and common sense, as well as the plainest affirmations of the sacred oracles. Yet some of the Pelagian leaven they are desirous of re-

taining, lest man and free-will be brought too low, lest its rejection should affect his accountability, and lest human transgressions be made ultimately to reflect dishonour upon our Maker. Ability and obligation, say they, are commensurate; and were there not some ability remaining, as opposed to total depravity, how could men be accountable? By such reasonings they abundantly shew, that they understand not the real nature of moral depravity, nor the grounds of moral obligation. They see no difference between being *able* and being *willing* to do a thing. Their notion of the self-determining power of the will is a thick and impenetrable veil, which, so long as they retain it, will always keep them in the dark. If they cannot see, they may be told, "if haply they may feel after" the truth, that it is not the will, but the nature of man, as virtuous or vicious, that determines his choice, and from which all his depraved actions proceed. A self-determining power in man or angel, or in the Maker of all, has for its countenance neither Scripture, sense, nor science. There can be no excellence in what is not possible. Were it a perfection in God, there would be some show of argument in claiming it as an excellence in man. But before any attempt the latter, let them, if they can, establish the former. In that attempt, peradventure, they may find where the truth stands.

Thirdly, Some regard human nature as *totally* depraved. This requires cautious explanation, the want of which has occasioned the Pelagian and the Semi-Pelagian to prefer the doctrine of the proud Stoic, of the sceptic, the infidel, and the giddy multitude, to evangelical truth. As this view of the subject has so frequently been misapprehended and abused, it may be proper to state what it *does not* contain or imply. It does NOT imply that anything in man essential to moral obligation is impaired,—that the physical powers of the mind are essentially changed,—that it is a substance, or something positive, conveyed from father to son,—that it is, in some sense, an effect of Divine operation or purpose,—that its removal requires the superinduction of some new physical faculty. No such ideas are intended or implied in the doctrine of total moral depravity.

If these particulars, which have been so often made to form a caricature of the doctrine, are excluded, let us inquire what is the sentiment maintained. It is—(1.) That no one of the human race, as a natural descendant of the first man, is possessed of perfect

righteousness and true holiness, such as Adam had before his transgression. Considered as his posterity, we are destitute of it; and yet all we have from the Creator, in the course of His providence, is good of its kind, and therefore worthy of Him. (2.) That the absence of this perfect righteousness and holiness is *total*, because there is no medium between perfection and the want of it. The breach of one link is a breach of the whole chain. A defect of one inch in measure, or of one ounce in weight, is a total defect in reference to the standard. The want of full measure or weight is a forfeiture of the whole. (3.) That in this state of defect, which is a forfeiture in equity, sovereign efficacious influence is not included in the statement; for God's work in forming Adam's descendants may, without this, be perfect as far as it goes; and, therefore, that there is not *any* principle of real and absolute virtue in mankind since the first forfeiture, except what is superinduced by sovereign pleasure. Whatever qualities, without a new birth by the sovereign will of God, go under the name of goodness and virtue, in a loose and indeterminate sense, are but comparatively and negatively so. One may be better, or not so bad, compared with another; and yet be destitute of that supreme regard to God which is the essence of true virtue. (4.) That in this condition of defect, and absence of real virtue, though one human being may be, through disobedience, further gone from original righteousness than another, yet the deviation of all is *alike total* from the standard of rectitude and the principle of virtuous obedience. (5.) That the will of man, in this destitute state, though allowed all conceivable freedom, has not the least tendency to remove that defect which is here designated by a nature totally depraved. The reason is, because every will is determined by the nature of the agent, and it is not the province of any nature to change itself. Whatever exhortations and requisitions in Scripture carry that appearance, it is always implied that gracious assistance is to be sought and obtained for that purpose. Persuasions, representations of truth, exhortations, and every species of moral means, however excellent in their tendency, only afford occasions for the will's determination and choice: for we cannot say, consistently with truth and fact, as is the worthiness of the object to be chosen by mankind in the present state, so will be the goodness of their choice; but we can safely assert, as is the nature of any agent, so will be the quality of his choice.

Such is the nature of that total depravity of mankind which is here maintained—the *total want* of what ought to be in a moral agent in order to constitute his ground of acquittal and acceptance, to insure his happiness by a radical moral conformity to God, and consequently to remove his obnoxiousness to suffer. This obnoxiousness to suffer is sometimes termed "the *guilt* of Adam's transgression," because his transgression deprived himself, and by natural consequence his posterity, of that perfection of righteousness and purity which he once enjoyed, wherein consisted his real happiness. And thus all the descendants of Adam, "in whom all have sinned," are *guilty*, in the sense of obnoxiousness to suffer, by equitable and necessary imputation; as the guilt of a father, by an act of treason, is imputed to his son, inasmuch as the father's act renders him obnoxious to forfeitures and sufferings. Mankind, as descendants of Adam, are endowed with physical powers and capacities for performing moral obedience, and these are worthy of creating and providential power; but the possession of *these* cannot render any one happy, without moral conformity to God. Hence a plan of deliverance from this destitute condition, as it cannot proceed from Divine equity towards the human objects, must necessarily originate in sovereign mercy. This plan is fully revealed in the gospel—by a substitute, an atonement to justice, a perfect righteousness, and a fulness of grace. Without this merciful provision, the state of mankind would be hopeless, as possessing natural capacities for exalted happiness, but destitute of moral qualifications.

A gracious renovation by a spiritual birth, which is a fruit of "the tree of life," an effect of mediatorial merit and power, removes that incapacity which is implied in a morally depraved state,—a state of deprivations and wants, of being obnoxious to suffer the necessary consequence of disconformity to a holy and just God,—and puts the subject in possession of a counteracting principle. The soul, by this renovation, emerges from the total depravity before described, to a state of holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord," that is, be capacitated for happiness in the enjoyment of Him. Hereby it is attached and united to the chief good, and becomes habitually disposed to secure it, in a full and lasting enjoyment, by laborious conflicts, according to the directions of revealed truth. But here we should carefully avoid the confounding of two things which are essentially different—the

removal of *total depravity* by a spiritual birth, and the *total removal* of all depravity. The former, which is the fruit of a vital union to Christ, and simultaneous with acceptance, takes place at once, and therefore, as an event, is represented with singular propriety under the notion of a birth; but the latter is affected progressively. The one is accomplished when a soul is "accepted in the beloved,"—"complete in Christ,"—"born of the Spirit;" the other by degrees, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,"—by being "changed from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord,"—by being enabled "through the Spirit to mortify the deeds of the body,"—by vigorously opposing all temptations to sin,—and by seeking, in the use of all instituted and other laudable means, "glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life."

As the preceding representations of the fact, and of the removal of human depravity, recommend themselves, it is presumed, to impartial reason; so they are evidently included in the scriptural doctrines of equity and sovereignty. And it is of importance to remark, that the *introduction* of this total depravity may be accounted for in the same way. For it is allowed, on all hands, in the first instance, that Adam was created in God's moral image, that is, "in righteousness and true holiness," which he possessed for a time; and it is demonstrable that this continuance for a time was of sovereign favour, and not his claim in equity, otherwise this claim must have prevented his actual failure;—that what was thus granted as a sovereign favour might be discontinued without any injustice to Adam, provided those physical powers were continued which constitute a sufficient ground of moral obligation;—that what he lost at the first step of his apostasy from rectitude was efficacious influence to prevent him from yielding to temptation;—that this efficacious influence was *not* afforded or given to him *when* he was *not hindered* from sinning, for efficacious prevention and permission are contradictory ideas;—that God *could* have prevented his yielding to temptation, if that had been His sovereign pleasure;—that man had in himself, as every creature necessarily and unavoidably must have, a root of mutability, which is also a root of all passive dependence, consisting in limitation as a negative principle;—that his will was perfectly free from constraint to an evil choice, and from restraint respecting good;—that God infused or communicated no darkness into his

understanding, no depravity or defect of any kind into his disposition;—that his will, however, was an active principle whose appropriate object is good, but *liable* to make a choice morally wrong, if not efficaciously prevented by sovereign interposition; otherwise he would have been without a cause of change, or absolutely immutable, which is absurd;—that the moment he sinned, his moral integrity and purity were lost, which loss, compared with the standard, must be deemed total;—that it is absurd to suppose an obligation in equity to bestow on Adam's posterity what he had lost, since it is not essential to human nature, nor a necessary basis of moral obligation, for this would infer an obligation to pardon every sin as soon as committed, and to receive every offender into immediate favour; which annihilates the idea of law and sanction, and of all accountability, and would, in fact, exclude the possibility of a moral system;—that, consequently, mankind, though born with mental and corporeal powers worthy of creating goodness, are totally depraved in a moral sense; that is, totally defective with regard to that rectitude in which their progenitor was created, and that positive holy principle which is the fountain of all true virtue.

The preceding particulars are individually capable of abundant proof, and admit of being illustrated in various ways. But this would not comport with our intended brevity. One thing, however, which is the turning hinge of all supposed difficulty in the case, must be noticed—viz., that the *suspension* of efficacious grace was in no respect the *cause* of Adam's first sin, though the continuance of that grace was the cause of his preceding acts of obedience, and might have been, had its exertion been sovereignly protracted, the cause of preventing his transgression. What prevents many from perceiving this difference and its importance in the controversy, is the habit of confounding positive and negative causes, making the former the only ground of certainty in events; and of not attending to the necessary distinction between a *cause* and an *occasion* of an event. Were any one to assert that the Divine law is the cause of transgression, it would instantly shock a reflecting mind; but one may say with truth that the law is an occasion of it. For, "where there is no law, there is no transgression," and yet "the law is holy, just, and good." Were there nothing good, there could be nothing evil; for what is evil but a deviation from good? So that good, in some respect or

other, must be the *occasion* of all evil. Were not God good and holy, it is absolutely impossible that there could be either sin or misery. Now, a display of equity towards a perfect creature might be the occasion of his failure, but not the cause; and the suspension of efficacious grace is, in effect, the same thing. That the discontinuance of a sovereign favour was not the *cause* of Adam's failure is evident, because it has not the nature of a cause of anything. If we regard God as an agent, in Him it has not the nature of a defective cause; and if we regard man, or any other creature, as the object, it is a mere nonentity; consequently, it is no cause at all. Thus creating power is a cause, but a non-exertion of creating power has not the nature of a cause of any kind. For every cause must be either effective or defective; the former is excluded by the supposition, the latter by God's infinite perfection.

Though Divine equity was an occasion of a perfect creature's failure, it was no influential cause, nor, indeed, any cause at all, of the event, any more than a law itself is a cause of its being transgressed. A perfect rule is not the cause, though the occasion, of deviation from it; and it is equally clear, that a suspension, or a non-communication, of a positive cause of good, is not the cause of evil; otherwise the want of efficacious grace would be a sufficient apology for every transgressor, which is absurd in itself, and contrary to every theory of morals. The truth is, and it is founded on evidence perfectly demonstrative, that every sin has ultimately the same origin and the same occasion; the former is in the offender, the latter in law and equity. And, indeed, we may add, and it is founded on equal evidence, the ultimate cause of all virtue, holiness, and happiness, is the same—sovereign efficacious grace. An attempt to simplify these things by reducing them to one head—the will of God—is founded in mistake, destructive of the harmony of essential truths, and fraught with horrid consequences.

From the whole of this discussion we may infer, that the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature as derived from Adam, is not only *asserted* in Scripture, but is also founded in demonstrative principles of reason,—that he who denies this doctrine, and continues consistent with himself, cannot assign any adequate reason why he is a sinner, or how any moral evil could possibly take place in the universe, — that Pelagians and Semi-

Pelagians, with the latter of whom the Arminians frequently concur, under pretence of a rational inquiry, plunge themselves into the most unreasonable conclusions,—and, finally, that the same principles which rationally account for any one sin in the present state of things, are adequate to account for Adam's first sin, and the total depravity of his descendants, in the sense before explained.

III. Were this the proper place, we might notice a variety of theological controversies which originate in the different views men take of the *Supreme Being*, His nature, perfections, and character, His *purposes* or decrees,—the *person* of Jesus Christ, the nature of His *mediation* and of His *kingdom*,—Divine *revelation*, and the seat of *authority* in religious matters. These topics, and many others, with their different ramifications, might be discussed on the same principles. But such discussion, however compressed, retaining at the same time the proposed advantage, could not be comprised within the limits of this volume. Many of them are already virtually included in the different parts of this work, and the examination of Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points, and Fletcher's Checks, is reserved for a separate publication.*

* [It was the intention of Dr Williams, if his valuable life had been spared, to re-write and expand the following Treatise on the Five Points into a separate volume—the designed publication above alluded to.—ED.]

Section IV.

A view of Equity and Sovereignty in reference to Moral Science.

That there is one First Cause, possessed of infinite moral perfections,—that there is a moral system in which creatures are accountable to the Creator for their actions,—that there is an essential difference between virtue and vice,—that man is the subject of liberty of choice and of moral obligation,—that he is influenced by motives,—that the occurrence of moral evil has a cause,—and that the fact of moral evil existing in the universe is not incompatible with the perfections of Deity,—are some of the primary considerations in moral science. A full discussion of these topics, together with their collateral and subordinate parts, would require more ample space than the concluding part of this essay; and, indeed, a separate work on moral science has been long in contemplation, and is in some forwardness for the press.* All that can be attempted here are a few sketches on the points now mentioned.

I. The existence of an eternal *First Cause*, possessed of infinite perfections and moral attributes, must be now taken for granted; as the denial of it may be proved to be an infinite absurdity, on the strictest mode of this kind of demonstration. Marks of design without a designer,—palpable effects without a cause,—a possibility of a First Cause without actuality,—contingent beings without one absolute Being,—are all demonstrable contradictions.

The notion of *two eternal* principles was openly maintained by the ancient Persian Magi, and from them by the Manicheans in the early ages of Christianity. It has been also too much favoured by some philosophic sciolists of modern times. The folly of the sentiment, indeed, is exposed by shewing the incompatibility of two principles being eternal, as that would imply two infinites. But this exposure leaves the cause of evil—to account for which was the only pretence for adopting so absurd a theory—unexplained, and indeed untouched. Though, by being thus pressed, objectors are, in point of argument, completely silenced, they are

* [All that portion of the work here referred to as in a state of forwardness will be found in the fourth volume of this Edition.—Ed.]

not thereby enlightened; they are sufficiently confounded, but are not therefore established in that primary truth in the light of which they see the ground of their mistake.

The single consideration of what is *due* to a creature, or what is the operation of absolute justice towards it, must at once unveil its comparative imperfection; and this justice, uninfluenced by sovereign interposition, will clearly shew, that indefectible stability in goodness is *peculiar* to the First Cause; and that evil of whatever kind is *peculiar* to a creature. As evil has no conceivable existence without a subject, so were there no *antecedent* standard of perfection, there could be no evil. That infinite perfection should be liable to evil of any kind, involves a contradiction; for it supposes that the only standard and measure by which evil is estimated is liable to become itself evil; while at the same time, without that standard, for anything to become evil would be absolutely impossible. Hence it irrefragably follows, that only a being derived, created, or dependent, a being comparatively imperfect and defective, as contrasted with the one infinitely perfect, on whom it depends, can *possibly* be evil. And as there is no medium between Creator and creature, the just inference is, that actual evil cannot precede created existence, or that an eternal evil principle is an absolute impossibility.

Limitation, compared with essential perfection, otherwise denominated "metaphysical evil," enters necessarily into the *difference* between the Creator and creatures; and therefore is equally inseparable from all creatures alike, the highest and the lowest, the most pure as well as the most polluted. This limitation or defect is not a *privation*, but an absolutely necessary *negation* of ultimate perfection. I said an "absolutely necessary" negation; for what ideas can be more contradictory than an independent or infinitely perfect creature? In the vast universe, positively and physically considered, there is, properly speaking, no evil, or not anything that deserves that name; for matter and motion, and the established order by which they operate, are strictly good, and worthy of infinite perfection to effect, though necessarily subject to limitation, and though sometimes they prove relatively injurious. And as to *moral* evil, which alone is *properly* denominated *evil*, it is evident that it can have no place but in a defectible moral agent. Hence it is plain, that no evil whatever—metaphysical, physical, or moral—could possibly exist from eternity. And to this con-

clusion we are led, by evidence irresistible, from a just view of Divine equity, as explained in this volume.

II. The existence of a *moral system,* in which creatures are accountable to the Creator for their actions, must be also here assumed; but I have a particular reason for taking notice of it in this place. It cannot be expected that moral science, as contra-distinguished from the philosophy of conjectures and surmises, should make much progress in the world, but in proportion as just notions of a moral system are previously ascertained. But how is it conceivable for this to be settled, except through the medium of the Moral Governor's true character? To little purpose do we reason upon "the intellectual and active powers of man," if we bring not into the account those perfections of Deity which are exercised towards the system, or stand related to it. After enumerating all conceivable Divine perfections and attributes, of each it may be predicted, that it is either sovereign or equitable, or both, in different respects. Just views, therefore, of equity and sovereignty appear essentially necessary, in order to form right notions of a moral system. To sovereign benevolence belong its very existence, its welfare, and final perfection; to equitable government belong its probation, accountability, laws, and sanctions. Its conformity to rectitude, in every instance, and consequent happiness, are *caused* by sovereign energy, since no other can be really conceived; and its being left to freedom of will, to its own principle of mutability, and the uncontrolled consequence, is *occasioned* by equity.

III. That there is an essential difference between *virtue* and *vice,* few are so far corrupted as formally to institute a doubt. However, a just conception of the Divine character, as equitable and sovereign, will enable us to ascertain, with greater precision, the real nature of vice and virtue. We observe, then, that God, as a sovereign, *wills,* in a causal manner, all the perfection that exists in the created universe, and, by way of acquiescence, His own perfection; and when a free agent really designs and wills the same in his accountable acts, he exercises *essential* virtue; and whatever act comes short of this, is called virtuous only in a partial and comparative sense, a sense which is incompatible with a character predominantly vicious. When the agent seeks the chief good, as his only appropriate end, by laudable means, he has not only what is essential to true virtue, but also what is *perfective* of a virtuous character. Now, as the virtue of actions is a part of the perfec-

tion of the universe, it must be included in the sovereign appointment of its Maker and Ruler.

Vice, it must be observed, is a *deviation* from the line of that actual rectitude or perfection which God wills. The agent proposes to himself a different end of his actions, and therefore seeks happiness in opposition to the will of the Supreme; and when the end is wrong, the means cannot be laudable. And though many such acts are called virtuous, because they have a partial good tendency, yet in reality they are vicious, owing to the agent having a different aim and will from what belong to essential virtue. Hence, because the Deity's own acts, all tending to essential perfection, and therefore in the highest sense virtuous, are agreeable to Him, every deviation from that line of rectitude, being for that reason vicious, must be displeasing and hateful to Him. Divine equity, rightly understood, will still more clearly shew this to be the fact. If praise, approbation, and delight be not *due* to infinite wisdom, to absolute rectitude, and to perfection of design, that is, to perfect virtue, nothing can deserve them; and if disapprobation, blame, and abhorrence be *due* to any object in the universe, the opposite of perfect virtue, that is, vice, must deserve them. Equity requires, therefore, that virtue be approved, and vice disapproved, for the same reason that Divine rectitude is approvable.

IV. Few subjects have been more acutely debated by moral philosophers than the doctrines of *liberty* and *necessity*. But most of the differences and perpetual clashings between those who have written on the opposite extremes, seem to have arisen from a common gratuitous assumption, that the truth must lie exclusively on the one side or the other. Both sides appear to concur in this one point, though they differ in every other—that man must either be free to the exclusion of necessity, or necessitated in his actions to the exclusion of liberty. Various definitions of these terms have not been wanting; and much ingenuity has been employed towards adjusting the difference. What has been said in a preceding part of this essay precludes the necessity of defining and explaining these terms; but it may be remarked, that the whole controversy turns on a previous question—viz., Whether there be, or be not, in the nature of things, a negative principle of certainty? Until the disputants have settled this preludious point, their warfare will be interminable.

Keeping in mind the principles before stated and explained, That there is no absolute necessity but that of the Divine existence,—that all necessity besides must be hypothetical, according to the condition on which it rests,—that there is no good in the created universe but what is an effect of Divine will, and, consequently, purpose;—retaining also in recollection, That liberty is a negative consideration, denoting *exemption* on the part of God as an equitable Governor, that is, *freedom*, in a negative sense, from constraint to an evil choice, and restraint from a good choice,—that in every creature there is unavoidably a deficient principle of mutability,—that this principle is ours in eternal equity, because we are neither self-sufficient nor independent;—bearing also in thought, That this negative principle of defectibility is an adequate ground of knowledge to Omniscience,—that the omniscient God has an infallible prescience of all events in their true causes, whether efficient or deficient;—I say, when these things, which individually are capable of demonstrative proof, are taken into the account, it follows that every man is at once, but in different respects, both necessitated and free.

If we regard a person's *evil choice*, he is free, in the fullest conceivable sense; that is, to the exclusion of all necessitating influence from the Divine will. And yet his principle of mutability, which is not from Divine will, is as certainly known, in all its relations and bearings, as any positive principle from the First Cause; otherwise, an essential property of a creature would be unknown to the Creator, and the most fundamental relations in the nature of things would lie concealed from the view of the Omniscient. Whatever is *positive*, in actions morally evil, is from God, worthy of Him, and physically good,—as are all created faculties, and all their energies,—but what they have of defect, of obliquity, or failure in design, is from themselves entirely and exclusively.

If, on the contrary, we contemplate a person's *good choice*, his will is equally free as in the other case. His liberty is not in the least degree, or in any respect, infringed. The difference consists in the principle according to which the free volition is formed. The principle, indeed, may be, rather must be, sovereignly bestowed, in order to constitute any choice essentially virtuous; as all good in the creature is the effect of Divine will. Consequently, all goodness of nature, and every virtuous principle, is the effect

of gracious necessitation. But this is not exerted on the agent's will, whereby his freedom would be disturbed, but upon his nature, where the operation of sovereignty terminates, and generates a virtuous principle. Now, his mind being illuminated, discovers the fallacy and insufficiency of wrong ends and means, perceives the only worthy ultimate end, chooses it freely and deliberately, and seeks laudable means of attaining it. Here the will, perfectly free, acts according to the nature and principle of the agent; but, to suppose the will to be uninfluenced by these, is to suppose it is influenced by nothing,—that man has not rational faculties,—that every event comes to pass by chance,—or, in a word, that effects take place without a cause.

While the will is left uncontrolled in its act of choosing, according to the greatest apparent good, the disposition itself, by which the choice is directed, is unavoidably in either of these two states—viz., possessed of a virtuous principle from sovereign benevolence, or void of it, as consistent with eternal equity. When the choice is morally good, it arises freely from the first; when the choice is morally evil, it springs with equal freedom from the second. If liberty, therefore, be the result of equity,—if the morally good choice be the consequence of a virtuous principle,—if this be the effect of Divine will, and consequently of benevolent necessitation; if, on the other side, the morally evil choice be the consequence of a source of mutability exclusively our own, neither created, infused, nor in any form the effect of Divine will,—the perplexity is unravelled, and the seeming inconsistency dispelled.

The Divine nature is the standard and source of all truth; it might therefore be reasonably expected that the true key for opening so intricate a lock must be a just view of the Divine character in reference to free agents. Equity, in the sense defined, will teach us that man is free, and must be so, from principles the most firm and irrefragable; principles founded in the respective natures and essential properties of God and man. If man be not *free*, absolutely free, from all decretive necessitation in the obliquity of his moral acts, moral government is but an illusion, and retribution but a deceptive name. But Divine sovereignty, in the sense explained, shews that man, in another view, is the subject of *necessity;* a necessity founded on the nature, properties, and prerogative of God, and the inevitable condition of man, considered not only as a sinner but also as a creature. On these principles,

and on these only, can we behold the full evidence of those important axioms, however universally acknowledged—ALL EVIL IS FROM OURSELVES, and ALL GOOD IS FROM GOD.

V. Another important branch of moral science is the doctrine of *moral obligation.* We cease to wonder that philosophers differ so widely from one another, and that so many of them deviate from the truth, when we reflect, that the real character of the Divine Governor occupies but a secondary part in the discussion, as appears from their systems. And in no part of moral philosophy is this remark more appropriate than in their discourses on moral obligation. The following remarks are submitted to the consideration of the serious inquirer after moral truth. OBLIGATION, in general, is *a binding force.* But MORAL obligation differs essentially from that which is merely *physical.* The latter excludes freedom of will, but not the former. A man may be *obliged* to go to prison, or to be executed, though *against* his will. Moral obligation implies force only in a *hypothetical* manner; that is, IF the agent would attain his ultimate happiness, he *must* choose the appropriate end and means—pure virtue. But whence comes the proposal, either explicit or implied, of ultimate happiness to the free agent? It originates in sovereignty, the sovereign benevolence of the Creator, who has made us what we are, capable of such happiness, and ever seeking it instinctively. And why are we *obliged* to seek it in the way of pure virtue, or by conformity to perfect rectitude? Because virtue and ultimate happiness are inseparably connected in the nature of things, that is, in eternal truth. The unchangeable nature of God, and the dependent nature of man, must have moral agreement and resemblance, in order to constitute happiness. To the exclusion of this, no other basis of happiness is conceivable. That virtue should be the medium of happiness, does not depend on an arbitrary constitution, but on the sufficiency of God and the dependence of man. Consequently, universal equity *requires* that he who seeks not his happiness by conformity to Divine rectitude shall not be happy.

Thus we see that infinite, sovereign benevolence proposes ultimate happiness to a free agent; but it is equity that *obliges* the agent to seek it in the way of virtue rather than of vice, of rectitude rather than of obliquity, as founded in the nature of things, that is, the nature of God and of the moral subject. Benevolence not only *proposes* to the agent a happy end, but also

decretively *appoints* an instinctive propensity after general happiness, and *communicates* assistance to some, and affords the exercise of unrestrained volitions in the choice of good. But equity requires that this agent shall be free to choose his *own* antecedents: to choose amiss, if he prefers it, as well as to choose aright; and, in case he adopts those antecedents which are connected, in the nature of things, with loss of happiness, the same perfection of Deity *obliges* him to abide by the disastrous consequence. What spirit *can* be happy without conformity to God? Where there is a radical want of this conformity, there *must* be a change on one side or the other. It *cannot* be on the part of God; consequently a vicious character is *obliged*, in the nature of things, in eternal truth, to be miserable. Nor can mere forgiveness alter the case, but as it is accompanied with a renovation of nature.

These things duly considered, we may perceive the defects and errors of many theories of moral obligation. We may select the following discussion of Archdeacon Paley as a specimen. Thus, then, he inquires and replies:—"*Why* am I *obliged* to keep my word? Because it is *right*, says one. Because it is agreeable to the *fitness of things*, says another. Because it is conformable to *reason* and *nature*, says a third. Because it is conformable to *truth*, says a fourth. Because it promotes the *public good*, says a fifth. Because it is required by the *will of God*, concludes a sixth." Having rejected these solutions as unsatisfactory, how does Dr Paley himself answer the question?—"Because I am *urged to do so by a violent motive*, (namely, the expectation of being after this life rewarded if I do, or punished for it if I do not,) *resulting from the command of another*, (namely, of God.)" But though this acute writer *asserts* that "this solution goes to the bottom of the subject, as no further question can reasonably be asked," his assertion is not satisfactory. If those answers all leave the matter *short*, his reply is *wide* of the mark. With a little reflection, the reader may satisfy himself of the justice of this remark. According to Dr Paley, "A man is said to be *obliged*, when he is urged by a violent motive, resulting from the command of another." This definition or explanation applies only to a *sense* of obligation, but leaves the proper ground of it untouched. A *violent motive* is explained to be the *expectation* of being, after this life, rewarded or punished. According to this, if

I have "no expectation," I have no "violent motive;" and if I have not the latter, I am not obliged. But are men *obliged* only according to their EXPECTATIONS of rewards or punishments? To say that this "results from the command of another," or "the will of God," does not alter the case. For, though this makes the motive to be violent when *perceived;* yet it shews not the reason *why* the command of another *morally* obliges, whether we perceive its urgent force or not. But this it ought to do, in order to go to "the bottom of the subject." And, in fact, thus to confound the perception or sense of obligation with the real ground of it, or to make the former to stand for the latter, is a very common error in the writings of moral philosophers.

When a person is said to be obliged in honour, in gratitude, in truth, in justice, or in reason, the meaning is, that IF he would be honourable, grateful, true, just, and reasonable, which are so many consequents, he MUST choose the antecedents. But, on the contrary, IF a person adopt the antecedents of dishonour, ingratitude, falsehood, injustice, or folly, he MUST abide by the corresponding consequents. We should recollect, that, in these and a thousand more instances, the obligation arises from an existing certain connexion between the means and the end, without any regard to the *virtuous* choice of the agent. For, though the end be good, not in reality, but only in erroneous estimation, still the agent is *obliged* (though not *morally*) to adopt means which are inseparably connected with such an end. For example, a gentleman receives a challenge to fight a duel, for words or conduct which are generally considered by people of fashion as deserving of such resentment. Honour is the *end,* and fighting the *means;* and the existing connexion is rendered certain by custom. He is therefore obliged, in honour, to accept the challenge; that is, IF he will retain his character in the fashionable world as a man of honour, he MUST fight. It would be ridiculous, however, to say, that he is *morally* obliged to fight, or that his virtue and ultimate happiness have an existing certain connexion with his fighting; for this would be most absurdly to identify fashion and morality, and also the standard of the one with that of the other.

The ends or final objects which free agents may propose to themselves are as numerous as they choose to make them; and they are left at liberty to adopt what means or antecedents they please in order to attain them. Here virtue and wisdom, or their

contraries, shew themselves. The nature or essential quality of true virtue, as of true wisdom, consists in the choice of one *end* rather than another; and these, in a secondary sense, are of a perfective character where there is a suitable adaptation of means to ends. Persons are "wise to do evil" when they have skill in the use of means, while the final object is unworthy. And persons are *essentially* wise and virtuous when their final object is the chief good, but *perfectively* so when the means employed are worthy of the end. The men of the world are often "wiser in their generation than the children of light," for though the latter choose the more worthy *end*, yet the former generally discover more skill in choosing means conducive to effect their *own* purposes. The reason is, that, in the latter case, the connexion is more obvious between the final object and the means, as founded on the analogies of nature, and subjected to daily observation; but in the former case, the connexion requires to be "spiritually discerned."

No person can be morally obliged to any act which is inconsistent with pure *virtue;* but to *this*, it is evident, every moral agent is constantly obliged. The ultimate standard of virtue is the Divine *rectitude;* to *this*, therefore, we are obliged incessantly to be conformed. The ultimate interest of the moral agent in being virtuous is final happiness: hence we learn, first, that personal happiness is the result, the termination, or the final consequence of virtue; secondly, that Divine rectitude is the rule or standard of it; and, finally, that Divine equity is the obliging power whereby the agent is hypothetically bound to abide by the consequence of his voluntary deviation from that standard,—which is the same as giving him his *due*. Here it cannot be too earnestly inculcated, that the misery of the wicked is not an arbitrary discipline, a mere voluntary infliction of pain, which a suspension of Divine will and chastisement would remove, but what arises from a contrariety of natures—infinite holiness and rectitude in God, and unholiness and perverseness in the creature. And this is perfectly consistent with scriptural threatenings and representations of misery in a future state, which profess not to ascertain the precise cause but only the terrible effects; and these are the very same, whether we consider them in a popular or philosophical view. Whether the sufferings proceed from the holy and righteous nature of God, contrasted with the impurity and rebellion of the subject, or from bare will,

"the wicked shall not go unpunished." The difference in ascertaining the true *cause* between the two statements relates to the Divine character, which by the one appears amiable and glorious, by the other cruel and forbidding. But no passage of Holy Writ, fairly represented, will countenance the latter.

VI. It is of interesting moment, in reference to moral science, to have precise ideas of the doctrine of *motives*. Until, however, we have acquired correct views of the Divine character as equitable and sovereign, and of ourselves as active and passive beings, we are never likely to obtain satisfying evidence on the subject of determining motives. If we make the *whole* of motive to consist in the object contemplated, the same object would affect all minds alike; and if we allow a difference in the minds affected, the object cannot be the whole of the motive: we are therefore constrained to infer, that the objects or moral means which God, as an equitable Governor, affords to His accountable subjects are not efficaciously sufficient. The state of the mind must be taken into the account, for the solution of different results in choosing good and evil.

A difference of mental state, whether by original conformation or by amelioration, can proceed from no other source than sovereign goodness; but a difference by deterioration, though *occasioned* by the exercise of equity, is not *caused* by it, and much less is it caused by sovereignty. Hence we see that equity affords objective means as a part of the determining motive; and sovereignty affords that state of mind which insures a virtuous result; while passive power, equitably suffered to affect the mental state, without the counteracting influence of sovereign aid, becomes a negative cause of a wrong choice. The external part of the motive is the same when presented to different minds; the internal part which insures a virtuous choice can proceed from no other source than God's favour; and the internal part which insures a wrong choice can be nothing but a comparative defect, which may be called metaphysical evil or passive power, and has no other source than limited existence.

VII. The *origin of moral evil* is a topic of high consideration. While some have contended that we ought to despair, at least in this life, of obtaining clear evidence on the subject, others have boldly affirmed that moral evil is of positive ordination. This is almost the universal sentiment of the modern advocates for philosophical necessitation who reject the Calvinistic system of theo-

logy. They are, therefore, obliged to infer that there is no *real* evil in sin,—that it is only accidental and relative, after the manner of natural evils. According to them, all the evil is confined to the feeling of the subject, rather than a deviation from essential rectitude; and if the sufferer saw vice and sin as God sees them, he would instantly be happy. If this be not the direct way to obtain a "seared conscience" and self-complacency in transgression, it is difficult to say where to find one. Is not this giving the lie direct to apostolic testimony, that sin is *exceeding sinful;* and to the general declarations of Scripture, that *God hates* all sin, and the workers of iniquity on sin's account?

But it is grievous that persons, otherwise of sound principles, should be so incautious as to run into this error. The late Dr Hopkins of America, bold beyond all the orthodox that ever went before him, though he attempts to guard his assertions against profane consequences, is highly censurable. The tenet itself, that God has *decreed* moral evil, is absolutely indefensible; it is, in fact, to destroy the essence of a moral system. Dr Hopkins must have been driven to this false refuge by the difficulty which his ardent mind found in accounting for the origin of evil in any other way. But far better would it be to continue in humble ignorance, than thus to charge God foolishly.

If, however, we view a free agent in the light of equity and sovereignty, in their exercise respectively towards a moral agent, a creature at once free and necessitated, because a passive recipient of his good, and yet the subject of free-will and passive power, —if we view the creature, as indeed he is, absolutely dependent, and in himself an essential contrast to the Creator in point of independence and all-sufficiency, we shall find a *demonstration* that moral evil cannot proceed from God by any agency or decretive appointment whatever, but from the creature's passive power, influencing, as a negative cause, his free-will. Sin, therefore, must proceed from *ourselves alone,* in the strictest sense. Though placed in circumstances the most advantageous conceivable by the exercise of that equity which gives to all their due, both as creatures and as accountable, man will shew what he is *in himself* when not supported by benevolent, sovereign, unmerited influence. And what belongs to man, *because* a free agent, is equally applicable to *all* created free agents, without exception.

VIII. Closely connected with the forementioned subjects is the

difficult problem, how to reconcile the Divine *prescience* of moral evil with the *free-will* of the agent. Without just views of equity and sovereignty, this problem must remain incapable of a satisfactory solution; but in their light, the difficulty vanishes. The good of actions is foreknown, because sovereignly appointed; but the evil of them is foreknown in their deficient cause, passive power, because that cause is equitably permitted to reveal itself without sovereign prevention.

IX. Hence we also perceive, by the same light, that the *existence of sin* is perfectly consistent with the *perfections of Deity.* If equity be exercised in the same degree, the free agent shews what he is in himself, both as a creature and as an agent directing his free actions. And, if sovereign benevolence be exercised towards him, in the same degree will he appear a monument of unmerited favour, promoting his own happiness and the perfection of the universe. The cause of moral evil being strictly in himself alone, as the subject of passive power and free-will, his errors are only suffered to take place, without being actively caused by the Deity. They are foreseen as what will result from defect, and not as the effect of positive appointment. What is good in the act is indeed appointed, but not its failure and criminality.

The agent's obligation is, to intend the ultimate perfection of universal being, to will as God wills, and to act in subserviency to Him; but there being in him a cause of failure, when not supported by efficacious, unmerited aid, infinite knowledge must needs foresee it as *certainly* future, and infinite wisdom overrules it for the highest good. Light and darkness appear intermixed; but the light alone proceeds from God, and the darkness from the creature's passive power. Yet the darkness serves, by all-comprehending wisdom and infinite benevolence, to shew forth the greater glory of the light.

AN EXAMINATION

OF THE

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THE ARMINIAN SYSTEM, PARTICULARLY OF DR WHITBY'S DISCOURSE ON THE FIVE POINTS, AND MR FLETCHER'S CONTROVERSIAL WRITINGS.

SECTION I.

WHETHER A PERFECT MORAL AGENT, IN A STATE OF ORIGINAL PROBATION, HAS *INHERENT* POWER, ACCORDING TO EQUITY, TO PRESERVE HIMSELF IN A COURSE OF ACTIVE UNSINNING OBEDIENCE.

§ 1. Introduction. § 2. Whitby's Preface respecting original sin. § 3. Remarks on it. § 4. His conduct in classing the orthodox with the ancient heretics, and himself with the fathers. § 5–8. The creature's absolute dependence. § 9, 10. The origin of evil, what? § 11. No creature has inherent power to keep itself perfect, if dealt with according to strict equity. § 12–17. Objections answered. § 18. Corollaries. § 19. Whitby on reprobation. § 20. Recapitulation.

§ 1. EVERY system depends on some fundamental support, and the Arminian system seems to me to be supported principally by three pillars:—(1.) That a moral agent, at least when perfect, has *a power to do good* as well as evil *of himself*. (2.) That the Anti-Remonstrant or Calvinistic side of the disputed points is inconsistent with *equity*. (3.) That the *certainty* (or, as they choose to express it, the *necessity*) of future events is not consistent with that *freedom* which is essential to moral agency. If these pillars are

shaken, the Anti-Calvinistic system falls. Let us now, by impartial investigation and fair argument, try their strength.

§ 2. In the first of these pillars, (which is the subject of the present section,) Dr Whitby must have placed great confidence; because, though he does not so much defend it in form, a great part of his book is built upon it. And I own it appears to me not a little surprising that the learned Dr Gill, in all his voluminous answer to Whitby, does not once attempt to examine the sentiment, but rather takes it for granted that Adam (though not his fallen posterity) had "power to love, fear, and obey God" in an unqualified sense.

Let us hear how Dr Whitby prefaces his work:—"They who have known my education may remember, that I was bred up seven years in the University under men of the Calvinistical persuasion, and so could hear no other doctrine, or receive no other instructions from the men of those times, and *therefore* had once firmly entertained all their doctrines." By the by, we may remark that, independently of the illiberal insinuation that the *University men* of those times *confined* their learned instructions and debates to one side of the question, so as to keep the other out of sight, we may justly question the former Calvinism of the Doctor from the reason he assigns for it. Because he had no other instruction, *therefore* he firmly entertained it. It may be fairly suspected that the orthodoxy of many other doctors and masters, who afterwards quitted it, was no more than opinion taken upon trust, in a similar way, of subjects they never understood. He proceeds:—"Now that which first moved me to search into the foundation of these doctrines—viz., *the imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity*—was the strange consequences of it; this made me search more exactly into that matter. . . . After some years' study I met with one who seemed to be a deist; and telling him that there were arguments sufficient to prove the truth of Christian faith, and of the Holy Scriptures, he scornfully replied, *Yes; and you will prove your doctrine of the imputation of original sin from the same Scriptures;* intimating that he thought that doctrine, if contained in it, sufficient to invalidate the truth and the authority of the Scripture. And by a little reflection I found the strength of his argument ran thus:—That the truth of Holy Scripture could no otherwise be proved to any man that doubted of it, but by reducing him to some absurdity, or the denial of some avowed

principle of reason. Now this imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, so as to render them obnoxious to God's wrath, and to eternal damnation, only because they were born of the race of Adam, seemed to him as contradictory to the common reason of mankind, as anything could be, and so contained as strong an argument against the truth of Scripture, if that doctrine was contained in it, as any could be offered for it. And upon this account I again searched into the places usually alleged to confirm that doctrine, and found them fairly capable of other interpretations."*

§ 3. One cannot help wondering that a person of Dr Whitby's abilities should be at a loss to answer this deistical objection, without giving up the doctrine of original sin. What is there in revelation, and *peculiar* to it, that the Doctor himself would call an *important* article, to which a deist would not raise an objection equally plausible? To answer objections by discarding everything objected to by deists is not the way to defend, but rather to betray the truth. The objection of a deist, therefore, (*cæt. par.*,) to the doctrine of original sin, or any other scriptural doctrine, is impertinently adduced against it. Who would ever expect that persons of deistical principles should give their suffrage in favour of sentiments because maintained in Scripture?

The above statement implies, that if the orthodox doctrine of original sin be not true, the *five points* which are maintained in that discourse are essentially befriended. The critical consideration of that doctrine operated as the mainspring to the Doctor's laborious researches, and produced one considerable part of his celebrated performance; while the *supposition* of its falsehood emboldens the Arminian champion to insult Calvinism as *indefensible*. But as the author on whom I animadvert has not, in the treatise before me, thought proper to attack that doctrine in form, however advantageous to his cause the demolition of it might be, neither shall I, in replying to the fundamental principles of the Arminian system, attempt a professed defence of it.†

If by a fair investigation it will be found a truth, that Adam in a state of perfection had no *power* to do good without *sovereign*

* Dr Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points, Pref., pp. i., ii. *N.B.*—I always refer in this work to the Second Edition.

† The inquisitive reader will find this done, in a very masterly manner, by President Edwards, in his book entitled, "The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended," &c., in reply to Dr John Taylor.

aid, our author's triumph on discarding original sin, and God's decree, "de non dando auxilium necessarium ad vitandum peccatum," *of not affording help necessary to avoid sin*, to Adam's posterity, is premature and empty. If the state of Adam himself, before the fall, was such as to favour our doctrine of sovereign grace, much more is it inferable from that of his posterity in every instance of conversion and final happiness.

§ 4. Passing by the Doctor's ungenerous endeavour to class the orthodox with the "Valentinians, Marcionites, Basilidians, Manichees, Priscillianists, and other *heretics*," while he modestly places himself with the *fathers** who wrote against them, as equally destitute of propriety, of candour, and of pertinence to the question in dispute, we shall proceed to a point of more radical importance. For what the primitive churches and fathers *did* believe is no standard to us of what we *ought* to believe. It is at best but *argumentum ad verecundiam*, an argument fit only to overawe children, not *argumentum ad veritatem*, an appeal to the truth itself.

§ 5. Our position, then, is, that "a moral agent in a state of probation, according to *equity*, however perfect he may be, has *no inherent power* to preserve himself in a course of obedience;" from which, if established, it will plainly follow, that great numbers of those objections formed by Arminian writers, and Dr Whitby in particular, against the doctrines of grace as held by the Reformed, must fall pointless to the ground, or else recoil upon themselves.

One might think that a close, impartial attention to one self-evident principle would soon lead us to the conclusion we mean to establish; that is, "every creature is absolutely, universally, and necessarily *dependent* on the Creator." Thus the great Fenelon, who was no enemy to *freedom*:—"I am a dependent being. Independence is the supreme perfection. That which is by itself must carry within itself the source and spring of its own being; or, which is the same thing, it must borrow or derive nothing from any other being different from itself. Suppose a

* In answer to that part of Dr Whitby's elaborate Treatise which relates to the judgment of the ancient Christian Church, or the sense of the Christian writers of the first four centuries after Christ, and before Augustine, concerning predestination, redemption, original sin, free-will, efficacious grace, and the perseverance of the saints; see Dr Gill's "Cause of God and Truth," part iv. passim.

being which collects in itself all the perfections you can conceive, but which, at the same time, has a borrowed and dependent existence, you will still find it to be less than another being, of which you have only the single idea of bare independence. For there is no comparison to be made betwixt a being that exists by itself, and a being which has nothing of its own, nothing but what it borrows; and which possesses itself, as it were, only upon trust. The will, or capacity of willing, is doubtless a degree of existence, and of goodness, or perfection. But good will, or volition to good, and desire after it, is another degree of superior good. For one may abuse the faculty of willing, by willing that which is evil, as to deceive, hurt, or do injustice; whereas good will is the good or right use of the will itself, which cannot but be good. There is nothing, therefore, so precious in man as this good will, benevolence, or volition to good. It is this which sets a value upon all his other faculties. We have already seen that my will does not exist by itself, since it is subject to lose, and to receive degrees of good, or perfection. We have seen that it is a good inferior to good will; because it is better to will that which is good than barely to have a will susceptible of good and evil. How is it possible to believe that I, a weak, imperfect, borrowed, and dependent being, can bestow on myself the highest degree of perfection, while it is evident that the inferior degree is derived to me from a first existence? Can I imagine that God gives me the lesser good, and that without Him I give myself the greater? Where should I obtain that high degree of perfection, in order to bestow it on myself? Could I procure it from nothing, which is the whole of my own stock? Shall I say that other spirits equally imperfect with mine communicate it unto me? But since those limited and dependent beings cannot, any more than myself, give to themselves any one thing; much less can they bestow anything on another. Not being self-existent, they have not of themselves any true power, either over me, over those things that are imperfect in me, or over themselves. It is necessary therefore, without staying to look at them, to ascend higher, and find out a first, all-prolific, all-powerful Cause, who is able to bestow on my soul that good volition which she has not in herself."

"Let us here add another reflection. That First Being is the cause of all the modifications of His creatures. The operation, to speak in the language of philosophers, follows the existence. A

being in its own nature dependent must be so in all its operations. That which is accessory is a consequence of the principal. The Author of their essence, therefore, is also the Author of all the modifications or modes of existences in His creatures. Thus God is the real and immediate cause of all the configurations, combinations, and motions of all the bodies in the universe. He hath set one body in motion, and by means of that He gives motion to another. It is He who created all things, and whose power still operates in all His works. Now volition is the modification of the will, just as motion is the modification of bodies. Shall we affirm that God is the real, immediate, and entire cause of the motion of all bodies, and deny that He is equally the real and immediate cause which actuates the will to what is good? Shall this modification, the most excellent of all, be the only one not wrought by God in His own work? Shall the work bestow this on itself, independently of its Author? Who can entertain such a thought? My volition to good, which I had not yesterday, and which I have to-day, is not therefore a thing which I bestow on myself. It came from Him who gave me the faculty of willing, and even my very existence. As volition is a greater perfection than bare existence, so to will that which is good is a greater perfection than simply to will. The consequent operation of power, when it proceeds to a virtuous act, is the greatest of all human perfections. Power is only a balance, a beam in equilibre betwixt virtue and vice, a mere suspension betwixt good and evil. The progress or passage to the act is a determination to the side of good, and consequently to that good which is superior. The power susceptible of good and evil proceeds from God: this is what we have proved beyond all possibility of a doubt. Shall we now affirm, that the decisive stroke, the operation that determines to the greater good, does not proceed from Him, or proceeds less from Him than the bare power? All that we have said evidently concurs with those words of the apostle, that *God works* in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure. The image of the Divine independence is not really that independence which it only represents. My liberty is but a shadow of the liberty of the First Being, by whom I exist, and by whom I act. On the one hand, the power I have of willing what is evil is not so much a true power as a weakness and frailty inseparable from my will; for it is only a power to fall, to degrade myself, and to diminish my degree of perfection

and existence. On the other hand, the power I have to will what is good is not an absolute power, since I have it not of myself. Therefore, as liberty is nothing more than power, a borrowed power can constitute only a borrowed and dependent liberty. A being so imperfect, and so little his own, cannot be otherwise than dependent."*

§ 6. If this reasoning be just, and I have no doubt that to every impartial mind it must appear so, it is obvious to remark, that it is applicable, not merely to man in his *present* state, but also in his state of primeval rectitude; and, indeed, to every created being, however exalted. Creation is a transit from nothing to a degree of positive good. Yet every creature, it is almost self-evident, has, in strict propriety of speech, only a *passive power*, and participates more of nothing than of anything positive and active. And such is the universality of this truth, that it applies no less to the most glorious seraph than to the meanest reptile. The dependence of the creature on the Creator is absolute and universal in its essence and being, in all its good properties and qualities, desires and volitions. It is to God the creature owes its will to good, which is natural; but much more its virtuous volitions, because a higher degree of excellence. The creature's power to act is from God; even all its natural actions proceed from His efficiency; how much more all virtuous and holy actions! Should any say that the actions of an insect are from God, but those of an exalted intelligence from himself, he would but render the absurdity more glaring, and increase the contradiction. We may safely and unreservedly assert, that Adam never exercised a good volition, desire, or thought, but as God *immediately* enabled him. This being a point of the greatest importance in theology, we should not slightly pass it over; and lest my sentiments should appear novel to those who have read but little on the subject, or whose reading has been partial, I shall make no apology for expressing my thoughts again in the language of others.

§ 7. Thus, then, the eminently learned and pious Theophilus Gale:—"Dependence on God for being, life, and motion, is essential to every creature as such; for all creatures receiving whatever they have *by participation from God*, it thence necessarily follows that they depend on Him for all. . . . . An independent being is that which needs not any other being essentially precedent to itself,

* Demonstration of the Existence of God, sect. lxiii.-lxv., lxix.

as the cause of its being and operation. . . . . Whatever is *dependent* is *ens*, or *being*, by participation, finite, potential, contingent, and defectible. Every dependent is *ens* by *participation*. For whatever is not being by essence and independently, must necessarily be such by participation: where there is not self-being, there must be a reception of being from some other, which connotes participation. Whatever is dependent is also *finite* and limited, both in being, virtue, and operation. Whatever is dependent is finite in *being*, because its being is by participation, and according to communication of the superior cause. Every dependent is also finite in *virtue and efficacy;* for whatever is limited in its *essence* must necessarily also be limited in its virtue and efficacy. Hence every dependent is also finite in its *operation;* for the sphere of *activity* cannot be larger than the sphere of *essence:* if the principle be limited, the operation cannot but be limited. Whatever is dependent is also *potential*. To explicate and demonstrate this attribute of a dependent being, we must consider that nothing is *pure act* but the first most simple *independent being;* no creature is pure actuality; where there is dependence, there is somewhat of potentiality or *passive power*, either physic or metaphysic. All *matter* hath a *physic* passive power, or natural possibility of being corrupted: spirits have not a *physic* passive power, or natural principle of corruption; yet they have a *metaphysic* passive power of being annihilated, or cast back into their primitive nothing. Besides the *natural power* which a dependent being has, there is an *obediential power* appendant to his nature. For the explication of which we are to know, that it is essential to a created being to be subject and subordinate to the first increated and independent Being, so far as to obey it in receiving all impressions, and acting under it whatsoever implies not a contradiction. Hence, every dependent being is *contingent*. For whatever has any passive or obediential power is obnoxious to the sovereign pleasure and concourse of its first cause, to which it owes absolute obedience, even to annihilation. Hence, every dependent being is *defectible*. For, as it is essential to the first, independent Being to be indefectible, so also to all second, dependent beings to be defectible. The supreme God being (*αὐτοὼν καὶ αὐτάρκης*) *self-being* and *self-sufficient*, a pure, simple act, without the least matter or passive power, it is impossible that He should ever fail in anything; but every creature being *ens*, or *being, by participation*, and so com-

posed of *something and nothing*, or of act and passive power, it cannot be but that it should be *defectible*, or apt to fail, which is the root of its dependence.

"The root and origin of all creatural dependence is the creature's passive power, and God's absolute dominion over it:—

"1. *The creature's passive power.* For the explication whereof we are to consider, that all creatures, being educed by God out of *nothing*, still retain a tincture or mixture of their *primitive nothing;* so that no creature can be said to be *pure being*, for this is an attribute *peculiar* to the first, independent Being. Every creature has something of *nothing* contempered with its *being*,—yea, more of nothing than of being,—which makes it obnoxious to *limitation, contingence, mutability, defectibility*, and *dependence*. This *nihility* or nothingness of the creature is the same with its *passive power*, either physic or metaphysic, natural or obediential; whereby it is limited, and confined to such or such a degree of *entity, existence*, and *operation*. So that all *dependence* ariseth from nihility, passive power, and limitation of the creature.

"2. *God's absolute dominion.* For all creatures having been educed, by the omnipotent power of God, out of nothing, and invested only with a finite, limited being, composed of *something and nothing*, or act and passive power, hence it necessarily follows, that all are subject to the absolute dominion of their Creator, and *impedible*, according to His pleasure. Wherever there is passive power, there is impedibility: there is nothing (*ἀνεμπόδιστος*) *unimpedible* but God, who is *pure act* and *Lord of all*. God has absolute dominion over His creature for all uses that imply not a contradiction. This plenary and absolute dominion of God appertains to His infinite omnipotence and supremacy, as the first cause of all things; for no dominion is complete and perfect unless it include a power of all possible use. May we esteem that a perfect dominion which has not an absolute disposal of all under its dominion? And to this absolute dominion of God must there not correspond an absolute subjection in the creature? Are not these two correlates? And doth not this absolute subjection of the creature to God speak its absolute dependence on God? Is it possible that any creature made by God should be exempted from His absolute dominion? And doth not absolute dependence on God necessarily follow hence? Neither doth this absolute dependence on God regard only the *essence* and conservation of the

creature, but also all its *operations;* for otherwise the creature were (*ἀνεμπόδιστος*) *unimpedible,* which is against the law of creation and dependence. Thus every created being is under the absolute dominion of God, both as to its *essence, existence, activity,* and *operation:* God can deprive it of each of these as He pleaseth, yea, reduce it to its first nothing. Hence *dependence* on God as to each of these is *essential* to every creature."

"Is not every creature *multiform, mutable,* and *defectible?* And must not every multiform, mutable, and defectible being be reduced to some *uniform, immutable,* and *indefectible Being,* as the original principle of its dependence? Is there not a natural levity and vanity in every creature, which render it fluxible, variable, and inconstant? Was it not a great and most true saying of Heraclitus, *that all things are in flux or motion?* Does not all this, then, need some first being and cause to *fix* their beings and motions? Again, doth not every *potential being* need some *pure act* to actuate the same? And is not every creature a *potential being* which needs God, the most simple *pure act,* to actuate the same? Doth not every *recipient,* as recipient, need the active influx of that principle from which it receives all? And is not every creature a mere passive recipient as to God, who is the first influential cause of its *existence, motion,* and *all?* Yea, is not every creature a mere passive *instrument* in regard of the Divine influx? Can it *subsist* or *act* without Divine concourse? Creatural *dependence* is not really distinct from the *essence* of the creature. That the creature's *dependence* is not really distinct from its *essence* is evident; because every creature being *ens by participation,* it must necessarily follow, that dependence on the First Cause, from whom it participates of being, is most *essential* to it. As it is essential to the First Cause to be Being by *essence,* and so independent; so it is also essential to the second cause to be being by *participation,* and so dependent: so that the very notion and idea of a creature doth *inseparably, essentially,* and *formally* include dependence on God, as that which is really not distinct therefrom."

"Every creature depends on God as to *operation.* For operation is the *index* of the essence: what is dependent in essence cannot be independent in operation. Let us consider the series of causes, and we shall find that every inferior is obedient and subordinate to its superior in acting. What is an *action* but that

special dependence which the effect has on its efficient cause? And is not God the prime Efficient of all things? No virtue or efficacy of any second cause can actuate itself, but necessarily requires for its actuation the Divine concourse, which gives all virtue, as also the conservation and actuation of the said virtue. The *virtue* of the inferior agent always *depends* on the virtue of the superior, inasmuch as the superior *gives* virtue to the inferior, as also the conservation and actuation of the same virtue. Whatever is *limited* in its essence is also limited in its activity and operation; and where there is *limitation* there is subordination and dependence, as well in *operation* as in essence. If every second cause depend not on its first for all its *operations*, then it is impossible that the first cause should hinder such operations, for the exerting of which the second cause depends not on him."*

§ 8. From this profound and very valuable writer, much more to the same purpose might be added, but the above may suffice. I shall next produce, in reference to the same point, the sentiments of one who certainly was not averse to *liberty* and *moderation*. Hear, then, Mr Richard Baxter:—

"As all being is originally from God, so there is a continued Divine causation of them, [the creatures,] without which they would all *cease*, or be annihilated; which some call a continued creation, and some an emanation, and some a continued action, or operation *ad rerum esse*. And it is an intolerable error to hold that God hath made the world, or *any part* of it, self-sufficient, or independent as to Himself, as to *being*, *action*, or *perfection*. We grant, therefore, that all the world is so far united to God as to *depend* on His *continued causality;* and that the beams do not more depend on the sun, or light, heat, and motion on the sun and other fire, nor the branches, fruit, and leaves more depend on the tree, than the creature on God. But yet these are no parts of God, as the fruit and leaves are of the tree, and as the beams are of the sun; but they are creatures, because God's emanation or *causation* is *creative*, causing the whole being of the effect.† It is confessed that there is no substance which God is not the maker of (besides Himself;) nor any *action* of which He is not the *First Cause*. God may well be called the perfect *First Cause* of human actions, in that He giveth man all his natural faculties,

* Court of the Gentiles, part iv., book ii., chap. ii. passim.

† Catholic Theology, part iii., p. 113.

and a *power to act* or not act at this time, or to choose this or that, and as the fountain of nature and life and motion, doth afford His *influx* necessary to this free agency. So that whenever any act is done, as an act *in genere*, God is the first cause of it: for it is done by the power which He giveth and continueth, and by His *vital influx;* and there is no *power* used to produce it which is not given by God."* "Human (and all created) power is dependent, and is not properly a power to do anything, but on supposition of God's emanant support and concourse, as He is the first cause of nature.† I conclude with this repeated profession, that I am fully satisfied, that all the rest of the controversies, about grace and nature, predestination and redemption, as they stand between the Synod of Dort and the Arminians, are of no greater moment than I have oft expressed in this book; and that the TRUE LIFE of all the remaining difficulties is, in this controversy, between the defenders of *necessary predetermination* and [those] of *free-will;* that is, (not, What free-will *sinners* have left? but) *Whether ever in angels or innocent man there was such a thing as a will that can and ever did* DETERMINE ITSELF *to a volition or nolition* in specie morali, *without the predetermining, efficient, necessitating* PREMOTION *of God as the first cause?*"‡

The reader will observe that I have not, in the above quotations, availed myself of Augustine and the *Fathers,* Aquinas and the *Schoolmen,* Calvin and the *Reformers,* Hartley and *modern* metaphysicians and divines; but the authors I have fixed upon are perhaps the least exceptionable that could be selected, being not only eminent in piety, distinguished for their acuteness and zeal in the investigation of Divine truth, and their extensive acquaintance with the metaphysical sentiments of others that went before them, but also of different religious persuasions. However, I produce them not as *authorities;* I only express myself in the words of men who were thus qualified to form their opinions, who were at the head of no party, who apparently had no interest to serve but that of truth, but whose learning and moderation are universally acknowledged.

With the concluding remark of the last of these writers I fully accord. The *true life* of the difficulty in those controversies that have so long subsisted in the Church, and which go now under

* Catholic Theology, part i., p. 27. † Ibid., p. 37.
‡ Ibid., part iii., p. 118.

the names of *Calvinistic* and *Arminian* sentiments, is this—viz., What is the REAL power of a perfect accountable creature, as distinguished from a *borrowed* or *concurring* power? To say that Adam's power consisted in the *liberty* of choosing what appeared to his understanding to be good, and refusing what appeared evil, and of acting accordingly, does not *solve* the difficulty, but rather *change* the situation of it. For the power here ascribed to Adam is only a *borrowed* power; the result of a *fixed law*, and the will should follow the dictates of the understanding, which is as much the effect of a *borrowed* power as anything done by man can be. Granting, then, that man has the fixed invariable *concurrence* of Divine power, (which is the utmost we can have in this matter,) to *choose* or to *refuse* what the intellect represents as *good* or *evil*, the difficulty still returns, How came the intellect of a *perfect* creature to make an *erroneous* representation of any object? In other words, *What is the* ORIGIN *of moral evil?*

§ 9. In answer to a question of such difficulty and importance, I desire not only to preserve all due reverence towards my Maker, but also to submit to the intelligent reader the result of my inquiries with becoming deference. My conclusion then is, that "*The* ORIGIN *of all moral evil* must be referred to *that* DEFECTIBILITY *which is essential to every created nature, when left in the hand of strict equity to the exclusion of all sovereign preventing acts.*" Or, "*Moral evil flows infallibly from the* HYPOTHETICAL NATURE OF THINGS, *if not sovereignly prevented.*" And it appears to me that the truth of my conclusion is supported by sufficient reasons deduced both *à priori* and *à posteriori*. To begin with the *former*, let it be observed:—

(1.) There is but one *independent* Being in the universe; who is *pure act*, unimpedible, and indefectible. This Being, whom we call GOD, is the *first cause* and the *last end* of all created existence. Whereas it is essential to every creature to have an *imperfect existence* compared with His; which imperfection includes, among other things, *absolute dependence*, in essence, existence, good qualities, (for bad ones have no efficient cause,) activity, and operation; and consequently such a dependent being exists and acts only by *participation*. From whence it follows that all the good it possesses, the good of existence, of virtuous and happy existence, of true conceptions, of commendable voli-

tions, and a holy disposition, proceed entirely from the First Cause. That is, *all good proceeds from God.*

(2.) All that is requisite to constitute any perfect being accountable is a *capacity* to enjoy the chief good, suitable *means* for securing it, with *freedom* to sin or not to sin. If you require anything more, you require indefectibility, and therefore independence; which is absurd and impossible. Adam, therefore, had a CAPACITY to enjoy God in rectitude, which capacity implies an *intellect* to represent, and a *will* to choose good. But though the will follows the representation made, by a fixed law inseparable from intelligent beings, yet the intellect itself neither is nor can be made indefectible in its own nature; for that would be the same as to make an *independent creature,* which is a contradiction. If the will did not *always* choose the greatest *apparent good,* then it may happen that evil may sometimes be chosen *as evil,* which would lead to consequences too absurd and monstrous to be mentioned. And yet, because the *intellect* is not by any fixed law infallibly connected with the *truth,* or exactly proportioned *real good* of the objects presented to it, (for if it were so connected it would be indefectible, which is absurd in its principle, and moral evil would be impossible, which is contrary to fact,) it follows that though Adam had suitable MEANS of happiness, they could not possibly *insure* his perfection. When therefore I say that Adam was FREE not only to *sin,* but also *not to sin,* my meaning is, that he was *not impelled* by any decree, concurrence, physical or moral influence of God to commit sin. In Adam's first sinful *act* (as in every sinful act whatever) there was something of entity, something to which God concurred, of which He was the efficient cause; and there was a something which was *sinful,* to which God did not concur, and of which He was not the efficient. Sin, therefore, if traced to its ultimate and true *origin,* must appear to proceed (not from God in any respect, but) from the *hypothetical nature of things.* Adam's defection, in its formal *nature,* was a transgression of the law, the line of rectitude; but the *source* of it was a tendency to defection essential to every created nature, and which mere equity could not prevent. From hence it follows, that *all evil is from ourselves.*

§ 10. I shall next offer an argument in support of my conclusion, deduced *à posteriori.* I will not appeal to Scripture language which ascribes all good to God as its original, and all

sin to ourselves; to the sentiments of angels who never sinned, or the inhabitants of despair; I appeal to the reader himself when in his most thoughtful and serious moments. If a person of sound mind and a virtuous disposition, he will undoubtedly acquiesce in the following language:—"I am what I am by unmerited favour. Whatever good Adam possessed or performed I ascribe to God, and not to him, except as God's instrument. Much more do I refer all the good found in, and done by any of his posterity to that source. I am nothing, I have nothing, I did nothing *truly good* but as actuated or supplied by *sovereign favour*. Not unto me, O God, not unto me, but to Thy great and glorious name be all the praise. Thou, and Thou alone, art worthy to receive the glory and honour and thanks. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, but not myself, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. I would join with every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power (not to *myself* in any degree, but) unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. On the other hand, God never impelled any to sin. If angels and men fell, they have themselves alone to blame. God *could* have prevented their fall, without destroying their liberty, by sovereign physical acts on their *natures*, whereby the intellect might be constantly enlightened, and the will cleave with delight to the good so represented; this He *does* to angels and glorified saints, and what He does to them He could have done to others. But if those who stand, stand by *favour;* those who fell, fell by *equity*. Behold the sovereign goodness and the equitable severity of God! As the fall of angels and our first parents was of themselves, so every sin I ever committed was *solely* from myself. God has given me a *capacity* of enjoying Himself, an *understanding* to know, and a *will* to love Him; but in many instances I have departed from the fountain of living waters, and hewn to myself broken cisterns that can hold no water,—exchanged the chief for a partial and inferior good. I take the blame always to *myself;* to myself it *entirely* belongs. Were I cut down and cast off to suffer the torments of hell, and that for ever, it would be but *equitable;* that I am not there *now*, is the effect of sovereign grace; and if I am ever placed in a state of permanent happiness in heaven, I

shall ascribe it wholly and eternally to the same blessed adorable cause." If this is the language of truth and soberness, the real experience of a well-informed and well-affected mind, my conclusion is justified by it, that while *all good is from God, all sin is from the creature;* that is, from its own *essential defectibility,* and therefore the *hypothetical nature of things,* permitted to operate without a sovereign prevention.

§ 11. From the premises it follows, that the creature's *power to sin* is properly and really *its own,* as opposed to God's concurrence; for when everything which is God's is abstracted from the sinful act, the remainder (which is only sin) is the creature's own. And it also follows, that the creature's *power to act well* is not properly and really its own, but *borrowed.* Without God's immediate act upon the creature to support its nature and disposition from moral defection, its intellect and will from misimproving means, as well as its existence from recurring to nihility, it can *do nothing* morally good. Properly speaking, therefore, Adam was not the author of his perfection and continuance therein, but the *instrument* of God; whereas he was in the strictest sense the *author* of his defection, there being no cause whatever out of himself for its existence. To refer sin to God as its author or efficient cause is absolutely impossible, if by sin we mean anything that is bad; but sin is truly bad, because the very opposite to holiness. As the latter is the greatest beauty, so the former is the greatest deformity in the universe. The one is pure light, the other foul darkness; the one is health and the source of happiness, the other is disease and the source of misery; the one leads to heaven, and the other to hell. To say therefore that God is the author of sin, is the same as to say it is not sin; for were He the author of it, in the same sense that He is the author of holiness, it would cease to be evil, which is contradictory.

By this account it must appear, that since Adam's power *to sin* was really his *own,* and his power of *acting well* was *borrowed,* his *power of not sinning* is, if I may so express myself, a certain mere *point,* an even *balance,* a *medium* or *neutrality* between a physical impulse to sin and a power of acting well. And the *power* of not receding from this point, of not preponderating to moral evil, of not deviating from this medium or neutrality to the side of disobedience, is in reality *borrowed,* and possessed during the sovereign pleasure of God; and it is *ours* in no higher sense

than as it is not infringed upon by any positive act on God's part. Thus our *existence*, as *creatures* only, is a power, not real but derived; to continue it requires perpetual causation from God, but to annihilate it requires no positive act. And thus the *perfect existence* of Adam, as *accountable*, was a power, not real but derived; to continue it required a perpetual causation from God, but in order to lose it no positive act on the part of God was necessary.

§ 12. But "if Adam had no *real* power, which may be called properly *his own*, how can it be said that he was under *obligation to love God* with all his heart?" He had all that could in *equity* be required: he had a *capacity* of enjoying the chief good, and was put in absolute possession of it; he had *means* both suitable and sufficient to preserve that possession, obligations and means being correlates; and he had *freedom* on the one hand to transgress, when set on the exact balance of trial, and on the other he was not impelled to transgress by anything *on the part of God*,—by any decree, active will, interference, premotion, influence, concurrence, or any cause whatever. What else can an accountable creature claim as its due? To *love God* with all his heart, was to keep possession of the good he enjoyed, and to this end he had all necessary *moral means* (the only ones that could be equitably demanded) to induce him. If he had no *active power* of himself to insure his perfection, it was because he was not an *independent* being. And yet he had not only a *passive power* of defection and transgression, but also an *obediential power*, whereby he was capacitated to receive ability from sovereign favour to obey the law.

§ 13. Again:—"If *active power* be incompatible with absolute dependence, which is essential to every creature, with what propriety may any *good acts* be called *ours?*" The act itself, considered in its formal nature, may very well be called *ours*, because *we* love, fear, repent, or believe, though God's premotion be the efficient cause. An act (and the same remark applies to the *state* of the mind) is good or bad, not from its *cause*, but its formal *nature*. Therefore, to *love* God is *good* irrespective of the efficient causation; and *vice versâ*. Yet the free agent is under obligation of gratitude not to himself but to the efficient cause. Though the act be *his*, it was God enabled him *both to will and do of His own good pleasure*.

On the contrary, if he *act amiss*, the act *itself* is *morally bad*, irrespectively of the *cause;* the cause is a deficient one, originating in himself alone. Therefore to say that it is a *hardship* for one to suffer natural evil (the necessary effect of moral evil) because he has no real active power of his own to keep the line of rectitude, is to rebel against the hypothetical *nature of things*, and to destroy the distinction between *Creator* and *creature*. To vindicate the Divine character, it is enough that the probationer is not *forced* to transgress. How much more becoming a created existence is this language, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe!" Proud dissatisfaction with the nature of things is the very essence of rebellion, and was *probably* "the condemnation of the devil." To say that in the case of a perfect probationer there was a *chance* of his continuing to *act aright* as well as to act amiss, is an attempt to hide our ignorance under the veil of unmeaning words; for to *act well* is no more the effect of *chance* than the *agent himself* is the effect of it. And to ascribe such a good effect to anything short of God as the original premotive unmerited cause, is contrary to all just conceptions of creaturely dependence.

§ 14. Some may be ready to object:—"If a moral system can exist on no other condition, what is there desirable in such a system?" "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto" comparative "dishonour?" If there were no moral system, the glorious attribute of *equity* could never be *exercised*. And yet, if the attribute of *mere* equity be exercised and made manifest, such is the creature's passive power, that the system must needs be deranged.* If therefore equity be a glorious attribute, and if moral imperfection be the certain consequence of its display, goodness and wisdom seem to require, in some instances, the interposition of sovereignty; for it appears repugnant to our best ideas of goodness and wisdom (which, if we form any sentiments at all, we must follow) to suppose, that the display of one attribute should inevi-

* "Without having recourse to any ill *genius* or *demon*, we may fairly and solidly account for the *origin of evil*, from the possibility of a various use or application of our liberty; even as that capacity or possibility itself is ultimately founded on the *defectibility* and *finiteness* of a created nature."—*Ditton on the Resurrection*, p. 427, Edit. 1727.

tably terminate, as that of mere equity would, in the misery of the creature, without any *possibility* of preventing its operation: but this prevention, it is demonstrable, can be effected only by sovereign grace. Whence it must appear to every unprejudiced mind, that a moral system existing on this condition and in these circumstances is the most wonderful and glorious part of all creation.

§ 15. "Might not the inconvenience of moral evil have been prevented by a positive decree to the contrary?" No decree could alter the *abstract nature of things*, because no decree could alter the *nature of God* on which they are founded; and the following *hypothetical nature of things*, or connexion of causes and effects, in reference to the present subject, I apprehend amounts to a plain demonstration:—If God create any being, that being must be absolutely dependent; if He shew His equity *ad extra*, unattended with sovereign aids, the creature must fail to produce actions morally good; if this deviation from rectitude take place, natural evil (consisting in the *loss* of the chief good, and a *consciousness* of that loss) must ensue, without a miraculous prevention; if this being, having once offended, be restored, it must be effected by sovereign mercy and grace. So that, in effect, the import of the objection is, Whether the same thing can *be* and *not be* at the same time? It was undoubtedly a matter of sovereign pleasure with God either to form a system or not, and one system rather than another; but to suppose that mere pleasure and appointment could constitute and effect a contradiction is absurd. However, we must say that the existence of moral evil is only *hypothetically* necessary. If *equity* and *mercy* be displayed, moral evil must not be prevented. It is therefore granted that moral evil might have been prevented by a positive decree to the contrary; but at the expense of eternally concealing the glorious attributes just mentioned, and the plan of redeeming grace, which, in its contrivance, execution, and effects, will be the subject of everlasting admiration. Our business should be, not to cavil at the ways of Jehovah, as if they were not equal, but to humble ourselves under His mighty hand; to thirst after the water of the river of life that issues from under the throne of mercy. This would cure our fever, set our hearts at ease, enlighten our eyes, and slay our enmity. *If sin abounds, grace doth much more abound.*

§ 16. It may be again objected:—"If Adam was not impelled

to sin, and had no power of himself to act, how came he to sin at all?" Why he acted at all was not *mero casu*, but by the law of his nature as an agent, it being a good and wise constitution that the will should follow the dictates of the understanding.* This *impulse* to act is good, because it is an impulse towards the chief good; and to *act* is in itself indifferent: to act *well* is good, and the effect of Divine favour; but to act *ill* is the consequence of a limited view of objects, from which the choice must be made; which limitation itself is essential to every created nature, as is the evil of imperfect existence.

§ 17. Once more:—"If the sin of Adam was a *wrong action*, and *sinning* in every instance implies the same, how can we account for the sinfulness of *omissions?*" Sinning consists in a person's engagement to some object that stands in competition with another,—to self, to sensual pleasure, indulgence, indolence, or the like,—whereby the line of rectitude is transgressed. If, therefore, a person *does not love God*, for instance, it is because he *loves some other object* with that affection which is due to *Him*. So that, strictly speaking, *to sin*, even in those instances that go under the name of *omissions*, is to *act wrong*. However, it is proper enough to say, that *not to love God* is highly *criminal* in every creature that is capable of loving Him, because the inference is infallible that he is criminally employed while not loving Him. Man was made *to love God* above all; but when he loves created good, himself, pleasure, ease, indulgence, or anything else more than God, there lies his criminality. To *pray* is a duty, but the formal nature of the prayerless person's crime is, that he is

* "The *established order of nature* is, that the will should always act in a just and regular subordination to the dictates of the understanding; that the mind, as a sure guide, should go before, determining which is fit to be done and pursued, or omitted and avoided; and by that means direct and lead on the operations of this faculty, which ought to choose or refuse accordingly. And the understanding being supposed to be rightly informed, we always act rationally and well when things go on in this course; the mind duly prescribing, and the will sweetly yielding to its prescriptions, each power keeping its proper place and office. But whether the mind be duly informed or no, the same law of nature must always take place. Some sort of conclusions *must* be made, whether they be just or unjust ones, whether plain and express, or only tacit and by consequence, before the will formally consents and gives orders to the executive powers to exert themselves. Otherwise, the will of man were not a noble rational appetite, but a blind irrational one. For therefore we call it *appetitus rationalis*, because it is made to act *sub ductu rationis*."—*Ditton*, ut supra, p. 89.

attached to, or engaged in, something else which is less proper, at the time, all circumstances considered.

§ 18. From the premises we may draw the following corollaries:—

First Coroll.—The angels who never fell, and the spirits of just men made perfect, as well as the heirs of salvation in this world, owe their standing in purity and happiness, not to any virtue or inherent power of their own, but to the *sovereign grace* of God. For the same reason that our first parents *did* fall, these *would* fall if left in *strict equity* to risk the consequence of probation.

Second Coroll.—The excellency and suitableness of *moral means* are no security to a free agent in a state of probation. For, surely, Adam had a full and clear exhibition of means, the most suitable and excellent conceivable, and yet he fell. How extremely futile is the following objection of Dr Whitby:—"Either these *means* are *sufficient* to render them *truly willing* to believe and repent, or they are not; either they are sufficient to remove the defectiveness or disability of will they have contracted by the fall of Adam to these saving actions, or they are not: if they are not, how are they *means sufficient* for the attainment of the salvation which belongs only to the believer and the penitent, or the escaping that damnation which necessarily follows upon the disability and defect for which no sufficient remedy is by grace provided?"* Not only in this passage, but through all his book does the Doctor confound *moral means* with *efficient cause.* MEANS are objective instruments, rational inducements, or good things exhibited; to suppose, therefore, that *sufficiency* of means must infer security and happiness, is to suppose either that Adam himself had not a sufficiency of means, or that neither he nor his posterity were in a state of probation. But as Adam had sufficient means, and yet fell, much more his posterity, in their degenerate state, are not secured from perdition by mere sufficiency of means.

Third Coroll.—As the defection of Adam, or the origin of moral evil, has no positive efficient cause, *reprobation,* according to Dr Whitby's definition of it, can have no existence. "Absolute reprobation is an absolute infallible decree, that, *v. g.*, Judas shall unavoidably fail of obtaining life eternal; that this event shall be

* Discourse, p. 4.

so certain, that he shall never fail to run himself wilfully upon his damnation."* This is a definition which has nothing to answer it in the nature of things. Whether any of the orthodox have given such a representation of that state of things which is opposite to absolute election or not, is not my business to inquire. But if the doctrine of the preceding pages be true, and the reasoning conclusive, the following remark is erroneous:—"Whatsoever argument holds good against an absolute decree of reprobation, must certainly destroy the opposite decree of absolute election."† *Sin* cannot possibly be the object of positive appointment, or absolute decree, because it has no efficient cause; it is the creature's *own* fault, without *any* aid or concurrence of God whatever: so that if Judas, or any one else, *shall never fail to run himself wilfully upon his damnation,* it is not owing to any act or purpose of God; it arises from the *nature of things,* that a creature, if left to itself without preventing grace, must fall. And all the hardship (if any mind can be found profane enough to call it a hardship) lies in this, that there are some properties of the Creator not communicable to the creature. One of these is *independence,* whence arises *indefectibility.* On the contrary, *grace* requires Divine operation, and consequently Divine purpose or absolute decree. These conclusions are fairly connected with this axiom:—*All evil is from ourselves, but all good is from God.*

§ 19. Dr Whitby contends that the *decree of reprobation* hath no foundation in the Holy Scriptures, and that it is contrary to the plain declarations of Scripture. According to his account of reprobation, this is very true; and therefore all he says on that head is to no purpose.‡ What he quotes from Bishop Davenant does by no means imply what he infers from it. The Bishop says:—"No medium can be assigned, either on God's part, betwixt the decrees of predestinating some men, and not predestinating some others; or on men's part, betwixt men absolutely predestinated to the attainment of life eternal, and absolutely pretermitted, and left infallibly to fail of the obtainment of eternal life; which we call reprobation."§ The propriety of the expressions in this quotation cannot be defended; for a "*decree* of *not* predestinating" is, I believe, what no man can form just conceptions of. What God

* Discourse, p. 6.
† Ibid., p. 2.
‡ Discourse i., chap. i., ii., passim.
§ Animad. on Hord., p. 205.

has decreed He certainly effects, and what He effects He certainly decreed; but as He does not effect sin, so neither has He decreed it. Sin is a *privation* in which God has no hand; how can it, therefore, be *decreed?* And the propriety of saying that any are predestinated to suffer punishment, is the same as if I should say, *That* man has voluntarily wounded himself, therefore his *suffering* was *decreed.* As the one is a *necessary* consequence according to the laws of nature, so the other is a *necessary* effect of sinning, while the operation of strict equity continues. But though I do not defend the manner of expression, the sentiment itself, *that men left to themselves will infallibly fail of the attainment of eternal life,* is both true and important. The denial of it leads to the monstrous absurdity, already exposed in the preceding pages, of a creature at once accountable and independent. The Doctor's parade, therefore, about *ἀδόκιμος*, sometimes rendered *reprobate,* and *lamaanhy,* [לְמַעֲנִי,] God made *for himself* all things, is altogether beside the true purpose, even supposing his criticisms were admitted to be just.

It is again urged:—"Every exhortation to do a thing we know men cannot do must be vain; and he who by it seems to be desirous we should do that which he knows we cannot, must delude us; and if he knows that God, by some antecedent purpose, will, or decree, resolved to withhold that aid by which alone we can be in a capacity to do it, it must also be an exhortation repugnant to the will of God,—it being, in event and in effect, the same to will that any person should not do the thing which he requires, and to will he should not have the means by which alone he can perform it. Now, it is blasphemy to say the exhortations of the Son of God were vain, delusory, and contrary to His Father's will."* This reasoning is adopted in many parts of the work before me, and is founded entirely on suppositions which I have shewn to be totally inconsistent with truth. It supposes that men's *obligations* arise from their efficient power of doing what is commanded, rather than from the *moral means* afforded them. If, added to a *capacity* of enjoyment, and the *liberty* of choosing what appears to us preferable, anything more be required for a ground of obligation than *moral means* adapted in their own nature to make us happy, to *sin* would be *impossible.* Join *ability* to *means,* and actual defection is effectually prevented. But to say that God is

* Discourse, p. 12.

obliged in equity to prevent such defection, is the same as to say that He has no right to make accountable, defectible, dependent beings,—no right to give laws which may be broken, to govern creatures which may rebel, or to judge creatures who may involve themselves in guilt,—in a word, that to constitute a moral system is impossible; which is a consequence at once just, from our author's principles of reasoning, and yet too impious for any Theist to maintain in its naked form. Besides, our author supposes that the doctrine of the orthodox denies to the reprobates a sufficiency of *means* for securing happiness, and implies a *decree of withholding* necessary aid; both which are plainly erroneous. No one can justly say that he has not *suitable means* of salvation, while he has exhibited before him the precepts and promises of the sacred oracles; nor is it maintained that any are condemned but for the abuse of such means as they really enjoy. And as to a *decree of withholding* aids, it is no less absurd than a *decree not to decree,* or a *decree to decree nothing.*

But "God's foreknowledge, sayings, and predictions have no such *influence* on the will of man as to lay on him a necessity to do what He foreknows, and hath foretold he will do."* Granted; and a formal proof of a proposition so plain was needless. However, if God actually *does* foreknow the event of things, there must be some reason or cause of it, whether we know that cause or not; and to call this *contingence* or *self-determination* is but to cover our ignorance with barbarous, unmeaning words. If God foreknows the result of all *possible* systems, whether natural or moral, there must be an infallible ground of that foreknowledge, which, I humbly conceive, may be sufficiently accounted for by ascribing all entity and goodness, whether actual or hypothetical, natural and moral, to God as the cause, which His infinite knowledge must needs perfectly comprehend, and consequently everything, in every possible degree, which may be called evil or defective. He who knows precisely, as being the proper cause thereof, every degree of pleasure, beauty, and light, must, with equal precision, know the pain, deformity, and darkness that stand opposed to these. If the omniscient God foreknows all the *good* which He may cause, He being the only source of all good, for the same reason He foreknows all the *evil* which may take place, and of which He cannot be the cause, by its being a perfect contrast to the caused good.

* Discourse, p. 14.

If we can form some adequate knowledge of the degrees of privation, by knowing previously the standard and degrees of positive good,—if we can know the dimensions of a shadow, by knowing the dimensions and positions of a body that intercepts the rays of light,—with what infinite exactness does God, all-knowing and all-wise, foresee moral evil in all possible circumstances, degrees, and consequences, without any decree or causation of it whatever!

§ 20. Thus we have endeavoured to shew that a perfect moral agent in a state of original probation has no inherent power to preserve himself in a course of active obedience, because of the creature's absolute dependence on God as to essence, being, and operation; and seeing Adam himself had not that *power* which Dr Whitby supposes the orthodox deny to his posterity *merely* on account of original sin, which he affects to regard as the root of the points he opposes, it follows that one main pillar of Arminianism is baseless and rotten, however gaudily ornamented with learned sophistry. And among other inferences justly deducible from the premises, this is one: that our author's reasoning against *reprobation*, in his *two first chapters*, is like a formal attack on a man of straw of his own fabrication; as if an absolute decree of what is *good* implied an absolute decree of what is *bad*.

SECTION II.

WHETHER THE CALVINISTIC EXPLANATIONS OF THE FIVE POINTS IN DISPUTE BE INCONSISTENT WITH *EQUITY*.

§ 1. Introduction. § 2. First, Absolute *election*. The question stated. § 3–9. Dr Whitby's principal objections answered. § 10–12. Secondly, Particular *redemption*. The question stated. § 13–16. That Christ died only for all conditionally, answered. § 17–20. Other objections answered. § 21–25. Thirdly, Special *grace*. § 26–29. Fourthly, The *will* determined by grace. § 30–35. Fifthly, The perseverance of saints. § 36. Recapitulation.

§ 1. A second pillar of Arminianism is this, that the Calvinistic side of the disputed points is not consistent with *equity*. While examining the strength of this pillar, I shall follow the same order observed by Dr Whitby in his Discourse, beginning with the Divine decrees. And under each head it will be proper, first of all, to give the true state of the question, and then to inquire whether it stands on *equitable* grounds.

§ 2. First, *Absolute election*. "This, with respect to the *end*, is an absolute decree and purpose of bringing a certain number of persons to eternal life, without respect to their foreseen faith or perseverance," as the ground of Divine choice. "As it respects the *means*, it is an eternal decree and purpose of giving to these men, and these alone, that effectual grace which shall infallibly, and infrustrably, produce in them faith, sanctification, and perseverance to the end."* To this definition I am not inclined to object; but against the following *note* upon it I must put a caveat: —"Here note," says our author, "that this *election* or *predestination* considereth all men in the *same* condition, alike miserable and damnable, alike impotent, and wanting effectual grace; so that as in two apples of equal goodness, no reason can be given why I should choose one rather than the other, so neither can *any reason*

* Discourse, p. 35.

be assigned why all or any of these persons are thus elected to salvation, rather than all or any that are not elected."* If these words imply that there are not in mankind various *degrees* of depravity and wickedness, whereby some are in a *worse* condition than others through the different stages of life,—if they suggest, *that no reason can be assigned* by DIVINE WISDOM why any are elected to salvation rather than others, the orthodox doctrine is misrepresented. What we hold is, that all men *without exception*, but not to the *same degree*, are, in the view of equity, condemnable, impotent, and exposed to misery; so that not one of them would be saved were there no predestination or absolute election of some particular persons to eternal life. And we further maintain, that, notwithstanding *human* penetration is incapable of assigning *reasons* why some are predestinated to happiness rather than others, to *God* there must be reasons adequate to the discrimination. No one can *justly* urge a *claim* why a preference should be shewn to him rather than his neighbour, in respect of happiness as the end, or grace as the means; much less can any one plead *merit*, or worthiness properly his *own*, as the foreseen reason of his election: however, it by no means follows that God sees no ground of preference. Were it possible for us to view God's reasons of choosing, as they stand in His all-comprehensive mind, there is no doubt but they would produce a conviction of their propriety in proportion as our minds were virtuously disposed, or assimilated to God.

§ 3. "In opposition to this doctrine, I assert," says our author, "*First*, That the election mentioned in the Holy Scriptures is not that of particular persons, but only of *churches* and *nations*. *Secondly*, That this election doth import rather their being chosen to the enjoyment of the *means* of grace, than to a certainty of being saved by those means; that it is only that which puts them in a capacity of having all the privileges and blessings which God hath promised to His Church and people, rather than under any absolute assurance of their salvation, or of any such grace as shall infallibly, and without any possibility of frustration, procure their salvation. *Thirdly*, That the election to salvation mentioned in the Holy Scriptures is only *through faith* joined with *holiness*, according to those words of St Paul, 'God hath elected you [Thessalonians] to salvation (ἐν ἁγιασμῷ) by the sanctification of the

* Discourse, p. 35.

Spirit and the belief of the truth.' That it is only a *conditional* election upon our perseverance in a life of holiness, and is to be made sure unto us by good works."* Again :—"Consider whether he conceives more truly and honourably of God who thinks He *chooses* His favourites *without reason,* and rewards them without any qualifications but those He irresistibly works in them; or he who looks upon Him as one who dealeth with all men, not according to *His* but *their own* works, as they are willing and obedient, as they *render themselves fit objects* of His love, and rewards them as they use duly, or receive His grace in vain, as they improve the talents He hath given them, or hide them in a napkin?"† Once more :—"Could He hope to manifest the *equity* of His ways by saying, *All souls are mine,* if He was not only like the ostrich to the *greatest part* of them, hardening himself against His own offspring, made after His own image, as if they were not His, but even making *the most* of them, after the fall of Adam, under that previous act of preterition which rendered their damnation unavoidable? Is He so concerned to justify the *equity* of His proceedings by declaring that the son shall not die a temporal death for the iniquity of his father, but the soul that personally sinneth he shall die, when this more obvious exception lay against the *equity* of His proceedings with the sons of men that most of the sons of Adam lay under death eternal by His peremptory decree for the sin of their forefathers, committed long before they had a being, and so before they were in a capacity of any personal offence." ‡

§ 4. My present purpose does not require that I should produce the *scriptural evidence* and *arguments* by which I conceive the doctrine of *predestination,* or the absolute election of some particular persons to eternal life, is taught and supported; this the inquisitive reader may find in bodies of divinity, or commonplace treatises, which are innumerable; and some in a more *practical* manner :§ what I design is to vindicate the doctrine against Arminian exceptions, and particularly those which reflect upon it as *inequitable.* It may be remarked, however, that most of the texts of Scripture produced by Dr Whitby to prove that there is an election of *churches* and *nations,* are taken by the Calvinists in the same latitude; but how can the citing of a number of

* Discourse, pp. 35, 36. † Ibid., p. 29. ‡ Ibid., p. 32.

§ Particularly Coles's Practical Discourse of God's Sovereignty, and Mr Booth's Reign of Grace.

passages out of the Old and New Testament for this purpose prove that there is no predestination of particular persons? A few specimens will shew the absurdity of his plan:—"Deut. iv. 37, 'Because he loved thy fathers, therefore (ἐξελεξατο τὸ σπέρμα αὐτων) he chose their seed after them, and brought them out of Egypt by his mighty power;' where it is evident that the whole seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even all that came out of Egypt, are the elect."* Who ever denied it? "1 Pet. ii. 9, 'Ye are (γένος ἐκλεκτὸν) an elect generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye might shew forth the praises of him that hath called you from darkness into his marvellous light;' all which are the very titles given to the whole Jewish nation in the Old Testament. Now, since St Peter could not affirm of all these Christians, without a revelation, that they were elect, according to that sense of the word which makes it to import men absolutely designed for eternal happiness, he must affirm this of them all, because they all professed Christianity, and so were visible members of the Church of Christ."† Suppose we admit all that is here contended for, by what rule of reasoning does it follow that, because God chose the Jews and Christians *as a people*, there is no *personal* election?

§ 5. How many texts of Scripture are perverted, and to what degree, in our author's enumeration and critical explications of them, makes no part of my plan; this has been done already, in a very ample manner, by Dr Gill, in his "Cause of God and Truth;" let us therefore attend to what he urges under the *second* head of opposition, as before quoted. The *election of Scripture imports a being chosen to the enjoyment of the* MEANS *of grace, rather than to a certainty of being* SAVED *by those means.* It seems, then, if we have the *means*, we can *save* ourselves. The question is not, Whether or not God *chooses* men to enjoy the *means* of grace? for this is allowed by all; but, Whether God or the sinner himself renders these means *efficacious* for salvation? If it be said *free-will*, or our own *choice* and resolution, then the creature has power to quit its dependence on God in its operations, contrary to what was demonstrated in the last section; or, if it be owned that Divine *grace* gives efficacy to the means, then the point is virtually given up. For whatever is done by grace is done by a sovereign act, and consequently implies absolute election; except we should

* Discourse, p. 37. † Ibid., pp. 39, 40.

say, contrary to all reason, that God's acts of grace were not foreknown.

§ 6. The *third* part of the opposition is, that the *election of Scripture is only through faith joined with holiness, on condition of perseverance and good works.* It is readily granted, that faith and holiness, perseverance and good works, are connected with predestination, as the way appointed for adults in order to obtain the promised salvation; but this is not the point of difference. The main question here is, What is the *primary cause* of election? or, in other words, Is the *performance* of the conditions required the *primary* cause of personal election? We say it is not; because this would be to put salvation on a condition that would never, in fact, be performed, however consonant with *equity* such a requisition might be found. If Adam, when upright, failed in preserving his purity and happiness, what rational prospect is there that his fallen posterity will emerge from guilt, corruption, and evil habits, to innocence, purity, and goodness, by the use of any moral means whatever? Faith in its principle is the *gift of God,* and holiness is begun by our being *born of the Spirit;* but if faith and holiness are immediately from God, how can they be immediately from ourselves, or the primary cause of election? God worketh in us both to *will* and to *do* of His own good pleasure; but what He wills and does in time He undoubtedly *predetermined* to do, and therefore the subjects of such gracious volitions and operations (for no other are intended by the apostle) were thereunto predestinated. If it is God only who *begins* the good work of holiness and all true religion, which may be well called a new *creation,* He alone must *carry on* that work, which may with equal propriety be called a Divine preservation.

§ 7. We are again told in effect that God *chooseth His favourites as they render themselves fit objects of His love, and not according to qualifications which He works irresistibly in them.* I find it not very easy to guard my pen from affixing some bad name to the sentiment here expressed; and were I disposed to seek for an epithet expressive of its *desert,* it would be difficult to procure one. We cannot be chosen, it seems, in order to be made good and happy by Divine grace, but must make ourselves so in order to be chosen. Adam's descendants, with all their imperfections, must do *that* which it is demonstrable Adam himself could not do, before they can be elected and saved! What a comfort-

able, hopeful doctrine! For a sinner to *render himself* a fit object of God's love, taken in the sense here intended, excites an idea so monstrous, that I am persuaded no truly virtuous mind can think on it seriously, and without violent prejudice, but with horror, detestation, and grief. Duties are undoubtedly required by the Moral Governor proportionable to the means He affords; but yet we are *saved by grace*, not of *works*, lest any man should boast; no, not by any *works of righteousness* which we have done, but by the washing of *regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. There is no *salvation* without *regeneration;* and to say that we *regenerate ourselves* is equally unscriptural and absurd. Supposing, for argument's sake, that this initial sanctification is the conditional ground of justification, and consequently of election, even then the condition would be such that no one would ever be elected while the world stands. But if, as we hold with the apostle, God *justifieth the ungodly*, and in virtue of that sovereign act which regards the Surety and the sinner one in law, slays the enmity, opens the eyes of the understanding, and shines into the mind to give the knowledge of His glory, creates a clean heart and renews a right spirit; then our conclusion acquires *double* strength. —*Dishonourable to God to reward His favourites without any qualifications but those He irresistibly works in them.* Rather, how honourable in God, how deserving of eternal praise, that, when all men had gone out of the way of peace and safety, when all deserved to be left in darkness, distance, and endless woe, He stops the progress of the plague of sin, rescues the sinner from danger, and by sovereign grace, which knows no eventual resistance, begets him to a lively hope! Does it reflect honour on the Divine character to suppose that none of the human race ought to be chosen and rewarded but such as *qualify themselves* by the use of moral means? The language of some people leads us to think that it is as easy to secure the Divine favour and obtain heaven by our own efforts, as it is for a man of competent fortune to carry a fowling-piece in a *legal* manner. Would it have been *honourable* in God (though not unjust) to exclude from hope all but those who *make themselves fit*, or who *qualify themselves* for God's favour and choice; while it is demonstrable that no one ever did, in the sense here implied, or ever will perform such a condition? This pillar is so rotten that, were it not artfully propped by the enemies of grace, it would soon fall of itself. That part of the

objection which refers to the propriety of rewarding all according to the manner in which means are improved in a state of probation, the reader will find answered in a former part of this volume.*

§ 8. The objection which follows deserves particular attention: —"Could He manifest the *equity* of His ways by saying, *All souls are mine,* if making the most of them under a previous act of *preterition,* before they were in a capacity of any personal offence?" It is granted by all that God is *equitable,* essentially disposed to render unto all the utmost of their just claim; and it is also granted that *all souls are His,* His property, His dependent creatures. Now, if the hypothetical nature of things, and the essential nature of creatural dependence, imply the necessity of *grace* to secure happiness and rectitude, even to a perfect creature as before proved,† how can it be *inequitable* to *pass by guilty* creatures? If men are, in fact, *sinful,* it stands perfectly consistent with *equity* to *pass them by,* or not securing their salvation by efficacious grace; and if this be the state of all the children of Adam, of what use is it to cavil about the *manner* in which they are brought to that condition? To deny the fact, because our weak sight does not perceive the equity of the measure, is not unlike denying the existence of a material world because we have no clear perception of the *manner* in which the Almighty created it. If the infinitely wise God acts for a final end, He must *design* what He actually *effects;* He effects the salvation of some by the agency of His Holy Spirit, helping their infirmities, and *enabling* them to improve the means of salvation; consequently He must have *designed* this effect. Whatever in the event appears to be the work of God, must also appear to have been *purposed* by Him; therefore, all who are *eventually* saved were designed or *predestinated* for that event: but if God was obliged in *equity* to do this to some, the same obligation must extend to *all others,* (for all the difference between them, on the supposition, is made by *grace,* otherwise *none* would be saved:) the consequence of which is, that God is bound in equity to save those whom He actually suffers to perish. That is to say, He is bound in equity to do what He does not. Such is the absurdity of the principle I am opposing. If it be said, They who perish have *sufficient means* to be saved, but they abuse them; we say so too, and contend that this is the true and only reason of their perdition.

* See above, p. 137. † See Sect. I. above, pp. 265–289.

When our author accuses the *Decretalists*, as he contemptuously calls his opponents, he finds it necessary to represent them as denying *sufficient means* to those who perish, because in fact they run to damnation. These are his words :—"If they have *sufficient means* to convert their wicked wills from the love of sin to a prevailing love to God, the pravity of those wills can never be the cause why they are left infallibly to fail of life eternal, or why they never fail of running on wilfully to their own damnation; seeing they have means sufficient to rectify the pravity of their wills."* It seems, then, *means* are not *sufficient* except the effect be produced; the gospel is not a sufficient mean of salvation to any who are not actually saved by it; that is, in a word, means are no means except they act *mechanically*, which is to assert that *moral means* have no existence! It is easy to retort, If *some* fail of salvation, which is no part of the dispute, what is the reason of that failure? If the means are sufficient, how is it possible for any to be lost? But it is an acknowledged *fact* that some go to perdition, and it is equally a *fact* that they do not come to this end for want of sufficient means of avoiding it, (else how shall God judge the world?) hence we must infer that their perdition is *equitable*. But if so, no doubt can remain that the salvation of others which God *effects*, and therefore must have *predetermined*, is perfectly equitable, except we say that the exercise of grace is inconsistent with equity; an absurdity at which no one can hesitate.

§ 9. To bring into one view the evidence of this truth, that God's decree of predestination is not inconsistent with Divine equity, let the following particulars be observed :—

(1.) If the creature, *as a creature*, is absolutely dependent upon God for its essence, existence, properties, good qualities, and operations; if the creature, *as accountable*, has no further claim in equity than a *capacity* of enjoying the chief good, suitable *means* for securing that enjoyment, with *freedom* to sin or not to sin; if, moreover, the creature has deviated from rectitude by any means whatever,—it plainly follows that such a sinner is not *wronged* by God's preterition, or when *left* in that state into which he has brought himself. But—

(2.) If it is not inconsistent with equity to leave the sinner, whose misery and sin are *of himself*, to the naturally inseparable

* Discourse, p. 4.

consequences of his defection,—if in that case nothing which is due to him is withheld from him, it must appear with superior evidence that no one is wronged by being chosen to honour. There are but *three* cases that can be put in reference to this matter. Granting what the Scripture and experience abundantly testify, that all mankind are, *in fact*, in a sinful state, (how they came into that state refers to another question;) granting, moreover, what has been already in part and will be further proved, that no sinner *will* ever emerge from sin to purity, or *can* rise from guilt to innocence, without sovereign aid; either *all mankind* must continue in sin and misery, or *all* must be saved by sovereign grace, or else only *a part* be saved. The *first* of these three suppositions would indeed be consistent with exactest equity, if it be so to make a being free, and to give him a law with penal sanctions; but it would exclude the exercise of mercy. The *second* supposition would not, it is true, be inconsistent with equity, for if God exercised mercy towards every sinner without exception, we could not say that this attribute would be injured; but then it does not appear, in fact, even to those I am opposing, to be the Divine plan; for I have not now to do professedly with such as plead for universal restoration. The *third* supposition, therefore, is that which we acknowledge to be the real state of things. Some perish, and some are saved. But is it possible to conceive that any one is *wronged*, or inequitably dealt with, by being *chosen* to honour and happiness? Is the clay, which had no demand on the potter, any way wronged when appointed to form a beautiful vessel? If its neighbour clay is not injured by not being more honourably used, much less is itself injured.

(3.) Whatever all-wise reasons God may have in choosing some and not others, whereby the end He proposes may be best answered, it is plain from the premises that there lies no ground of complaint against the procedure. *Preterition* is a mere negative idea, which implies neither an actual privation nor a positive decree; nor is *reprobation*, in the acknowledged and scriptural acceptation of it, any *absolute* decree, being properly nothing more than the *hypothetical* purpose of God to leave the sinner under the influence, and exposed to the natural consequences of his own *demerit*. Its true language is, If such a sinner *deserves* to suffer, he *shall* suffer. But absolute election is from *grace*, and speaks to this effect: Though the sinner in strict justice *deserves* to

suffer, yet *mercy* in this instance will so order it that he *shall not* suffer. Reprobation, then, springs from *demerit*, but election from *grace*. Now, if equity cannot save, as of itself it certainly cannot, is there any reason why sovereignty should be bound? How justly may God say to such an objector to absolute election, Because mine eye is good, is thine evil? Besides—

(4.) The defection of all was foreseen as possible, and hypothetically certain, irrespective of any decree, and therefore not inequitable. Of all possible plans, both physical and moral, wisdom chose the best,—that which had the greatest advantages and fewest inconveniences to answer the end proposed by infinite intelligence and consummate wisdom. The *source* of all possibles is the Divine all-sufficiency, the *arrangement* of all possibles into hypothetical systems relates to the Divine intellect, but the *decree* refers, not to the source or the arrangement of its objects, but to the *absolute certainty* of what was already hypothetically certain. And as it is impossible to conceive of God decreeing *moral evil*, or *undeserved suffering*, it inevitably follows that *no decree* can be inconsistent with equity, and therefore absolute election is perfectly consistent with it; which was to be proved.

§ 10. SECONDLY, *Particular redemption.* The dispute upon this question is considerably narrowed if we take into the account what has been already advanced on the *rectoral intention* of the Supreme Governor, and the *obligations* of men to receive the gospel.* In stating the question, Dr Whitby observes:—"I reject that objection as absurd, which saith, *Christ died sufficiently for all, but intentionally only for the elect.*" † But the reader must remember that this is not *my* distinction; for I have allowed that God *intended* the death of Christ to extend *rectorally* to all; but what I now contend for is, that it extends *decretively* to some more than to others, and that this discrimination is perfectly consistent with equity. In opposition to this, our author states his notion of the universality of redemption as follows:—"When I say Christ died for all, I mean that He died *equally* for all. This will be evident if we consider, that He offered the same sacrifice, suffered one and the same death, shed the same blood for all for whom He died. Moreover, it is certain that the sufferings of Christ and His blood shed cannot be distributed into parts, so that one should have one share of it, another a second, and another a third. When we

* Chap. V., Sect. I., p. 117. † Discourse, p. 102.

say Christ died for all, we do not mean that He died for all or any *absolutely*, or without any conditions to be performed on their part to interest them in the blessings of His passion; but only that He died for all *conditionally*, or so as that they should be made partakers of the blessings of His salutary passion upon condition of their faith, repentance, and sincere obedience to the laws of the *new covenant*. He died not with intention to confer the blessings of His salutary passion on any but true believers, true penitents, and such as would obey the laws of His *new covenant*." *

§ 11. It is said, "*Christ died* EQUALLY *for all*, because He offered the same sacrifice, suffered the same death, shed the same blood for all for whom He died; and His blood cannot be distributed into parts." I readily grant that the *rectoral* intention extended *equally* to all, for the reasons here mentioned, among others; but how can it thence follow that there is no *decretive* purpose to favour some rather than others, with respect to its application? Can it be *unjust* to *favour some*, while *no* one can *claim* that favour? But it is urged "that Christ died for *all conditionally*,—*i.e.*, if they believe, repent, and obey,—but for *none absolutely*."

To avoid the rashness of opposition, and to remove as much as possible a misunderstanding of the state of the question in reference to the orthodox, let the following distinctions be candidly noticed:—"My scope here is to shew, that the body or Church of Christ are *especially* concerned and interested in redemption. And in order thereto, I would consider two other of the Divine works, both which respect the world *universally*, as redemption doth, and yet have a *speciality* in them, as redemption also hath—viz., *creation* and *providence*.

"First, *Creation*. One God was the Maker of all; but all were not made for the *same* use and end. He had a *peculiar* scope in the making of *some*, which was not common to the *whole;* yea, the *whole* was made for the sake of that *some*. As in a great house are many vessels, all of one master's providing, and all for his own service, some to [more] honour, and some to [less honour, or comparative] dishonour; so in the world, *some* God raised up to be monuments of His power and justice† [or, *equitable* severity.]

* Discourse, pp. 104, 105.

† Exod. ix. 16; Jude 4; Rom. ix. 22; 1 Pet. ii. 8.

"Secondly, *Providence.* This also extends to all, and to each individual. He hath power over all, and governs them in their most rebellious designs and actions. But as touching His Church, *the people of His holiness,** He holds a *peculiar* kind of government over them, and steers their concerns; and this so far exceeds the other, that, in comparison, it is said, *He never bore rule over them*;† and, which is still to be remarked, the others' concerns are made subservient to theirs: *He is head over all to the Church.*‡

"In like manner, *redemption* may be said to be *general,* and yet to have a *speciality* in it. It is general, [both] in respect of persons, [and] in respect of things. Both which are true apart, though not conjunctly: it purchaseth *some* good things for *all;* and *all* good things for *some.*

"(1.) As it respects *persons,* it obtains a general reprieve, extensive to all the sons of Adam. The sin of the world was so far expiated, that vengeance was not *presently* executed; which must have been, had not the Son of God interposed Himself. His being slain from the foundation of the world was the foundation of the world's standing, and of all the good things which the world in general are partakers of. All that order and usefulness which yet survive among the creatures, with all the remains of our primitive state, were preserved, or rather restored, by *redemption.* Christ is that light which lighteth every one that cometh into the world; *i.e.,* the light and blessings which any man hath, he has them from Christ *as a Redeemer; by Him all things consist.*§

"But let us not omit that all this had a *special* respect to the *Church elect:* for *them* it was that the world was made; they are the substance of it;‖ and but for them it had been dissolved or turned into a lake of fire. What the prophet speaks of Israel, was true of the *universe,* 'Except the Lord of hosts had left us a remnant, we had been as Sodom.'¶ As those days of tribulation were shortened for the elect's sake (not yet in being;) so, for *them* it was that when sin came in, destruction was warded off. It had been a *light thing* for Christ, and not worthy His sufferings, to raise up the ruins made by Adam to such a degree of restorement, as would only have set him in his former state, and that upon terms more unlikely to succeed. This had been to give a *greater*

* Isa. lxiii. 18. † Ver. 19. ‡ Eph. i. 22.
§ Col. i. 17. ‖ Isa. vi. 13. ¶ Isa. i. 9.

value for things of *lesser moment;* for it needs must be a happier state to be made upright, without bias to evil, than to be moved by all manner of motives, while fettered by unbelief, and a natural bent to revolt further. For notwithstanding all those motives or means, not the *majority* only, but the *universality* of mankind might have perished and gone to hell; which would in nowise have answered God's end in *making* the world, much less in *redeeming* it. It was therefore necessary redemption should have a further reach than to bring men into a *mere salvable* state; and that could not be less than a state of *certain salvation.* And, in order to this—

"(2.) Redemption was general as to *things,* even *all* that pertaineth to life and godliness; eternal life, and whatever conduceth thereto. This is that redemption we are treating of; and this is the sense of the present position—viz., that redemption *thus qualified* is *peculiar* to the Church; and that *election* is the pattern by which [this *peculiarity* of] *redemption* is to be measured: 'The *Son* can do nothing but what he seeth the *Father* do,' (John v. 19.)"*

§ 12. Having made these lenient conciliatory remarks, from a writer who is classed among the most rigid Calvinists, I shall endeavour, after stating my own views with all the precision in my power, to combat the principal differing positions in Dr Whitby's Discourse on this point, and finally to shew that there is nothing in the orthodox account of the doctrine inconsistent with any principle of equity. Subservient to this design let it be noticed—

(1.) That Adam having lost his rectitude and innocence, without a *Redeemer* neither he nor any of his posterity could be *saved,* because the claims of equity could not be surrendered without the execution of a penal sanction proportionable to the violations of law and rectitude. Had sovereignty suspended the sentence, pardoned the crime, and restored to favour, without a Mediator in whom, acting and suffering, the honours of law and justice might be retrieved, wherein would have appeared either the wisdom or the authority of legislation when viewed by other probationers? To sin with impunity, or to pardon without *manifesting* displeasure at sin, how contrary to all ideas of wisdom, legislation, and even benevolence! A supposed benevolence which flows to sinful men through any other channel than the blood of the cross, is an

* Coles's Practical Discourse of Redemption, pp. 117–120.

idea that has no existing archetype, and indicates in its votaries an impious attempt to set up the haughty, precarious wisdom of the world in opposition to that of God.

(2.) Christ being made a propitiation for sin, the honours of government are secure, whether a few sinners only were saved, or hundreds of thousands. Nothing less was sufficient for one, nothing more was necessary for millions. The great atoning sacrifice knows no limits to its efficacy but those assigned it by the decretive rule of application. If *applied* to all, it would be *efficacious* to all. A new and living way is consecrated, nor is there any bar of hindrance laid across it. Spiritual and eternal blessings are exhibited, recommended, enforced, so that the only obstruction which remains is in *ourselves.* Yet—

(3.) Such is our apostate condition, that a spiritual renovation alone, effected by the Holy Spirit, insures an appropriation of saving benefits. "Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase." The bare *discovery* of truth, whatever be the means, will not secure the conversion of one soul. When, therefore, the truth is received in the love thereof, "it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure." The Divine operation is the infallible index of the decree. What *is* effected, was *intended* to be effected. Those who *are* actually redeemed from sin and hell, were *appointed* so to be; except we say, either that man is his own saviour, or that some are saved who were not intended, which none will assert.—The way is now clear for examining the principal position.

§ 13. "Christ died for *all conditionally,—i.e., if* they believe, repent, and obey,—but for *none absolutely.*" This tenet supposes that the *ability* to believe, repent, and obey originates in ourselves, though involved in calamities of which our *inability,* morally considered, is among the chief. It supposes that it is not God who *worketh in us* to will and to do of His own good pleasure; that it is not *given us* on the behalf of Christ *to believe* on Him; that it is not an exalted Saviour who *gives repentance* as well as remission; that *obedience* is not the *fruit* of the Spirit, and the *consequence* of redemption. It is of no avail to say that God affords to us the *means,* but that we are to give them *efficiency* ourselves; for this is to renounce that absolute dependence of the creature upon the Creator which is demonstrably essential to it.* *Means,*

* Sect. I., pp. 265–289.

without a *disposition*, can effect nothing; for moral means operate according to their excellence, only as connected with the state of the moral agent. Let, therefore, the force and aptitude of means be accumulated and multiplied to any given degree, they will contain no *efficient* power to meliorate the mind. The very supposition is totally absurd, that *moral* means have a *mechanical* effect irrespective of the previous disposition; and it is equally absurd to imagine that the disposition itself is the mechanical effect of such means. In short, the *condition* supposed by our author is an *impossible* condition,—a guilty, polluted, impotent, inimical, rebellious creature becoming *faithful*, *penitent*, and *obedient*, *before* the merits of Christ are applied! The doctrine of the gospel is, that "Christ redeems us from all iniquity;" but our author teaches, that we do in fact *deliver ourselves* from the iniquity of unbelief, impenitence, and disobedience, *before* we share in the benefits of redemption! The fact is, he everywhere confounds men's moral *abilities* with their *obligations*. That we are *obliged* to be holy and good, universally obedient and conformed to rectitude, is one thing, and an awakening, inflexible truth; but that we, being transgressors, have actual, inherent *ability* to discharge the obligation, an ability for which we are not beholden to sovereign grace and discriminating influence, is a falsehood of the greatest magnitude, ruinous to the presumptuous sinner, and highly affronting to the Divine Majesty.

Christ and eternal life are proposed to sinners under a *conditional* form, it is granted; for otherwise man would not be dealt with as an accountable being. *Believe*, and you shall be saved from guilt; *repent*, and your sins shall be blotted out; *obey*, and you shall be for ever blessed, is the language of *moral government*. The declaration that *God gives to sinners* eternal life in Jesus Christ is *absolute*, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear;" as absolute and free a proffer as ever was made of a benefit by one being to another: otherwise, salvation must begin with ourselves, and therefore there would be no salvation at all. The proposal, as originating in sovereign grace, is *absolute;* as proceeding from the Moral Governor, it is *conditional*. Sovereignty, viewing men as *sinful creatures*, totally helpless and hopeless, makes *absolute* overtures of mercy to pardon, grace to help, Christ and His righteousness, the Holy Spirit and His influences, life and eternal happiness: thus He *gives* grace and glory, and *shews* man

what is good; but the Governor, viewing men as *accountable beings*, addresses them under a *conditional* form. In this proposal, however, whether we consider it in a conditional or an absolute form, there appears nothing of a discriminating nature; *all alike* are addressed. And now the question returns—Was it not the *design* of grace to render the appointed means *actually available* to some of mankind? If not, what certainty, nay, what probability, or even possibility, is there left that any one will in fact *believe, repent,* and *obey?* Is not the heart of man deceitful above all things? Is it not a heart of stone? Who but God can remove the sinful petrifaction, and substitute a principle of godly sincerity? Who of old commanded the light to shine out of darkness? What power was it that raised Jesus Christ from the dead? Sinner! blush, be confounded, be alarmed at the dangerous, the impious thought of ascribing to *thyself* what God claims as *His own* exalted, sovereign prerogative.

§ 14. In treating on the obligations of men to receive the gospel, and the universality of the rectoral design of redemption therewith connected, I took occasion to produce from a respectable writer some express arguments on that side of the question. It is but fair that he should now be heard on the other side, as it is exactly conducive to my design. Thus, then, Mr Polhill:—"God eternally resolved with Himself that He would have a Church and a peculiar people, and '*Christ gave himself for it,* THAT *he might sanctify and cleanse it* with the washing of water by the word, THAT *he might present it to himself a glorious church,* without spot or wrinkle,' (Eph. v. 25–27.) '*He gave himself for us,* THAT *he might redeem us from all iniquity,* and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' (Tit. ii. 14.) If Christ had given Himself *thus far* for all, all would have been His Church and people. You will say, Unbelief is the only obstacle. I answer, that if Christ had *given Himself* for all, THAT *He might wash them as He washes the Church,* and redeem them from all iniquity *as* He redeems His peculiar ones, there would have been no such thing as unbelief left among men; that Christ, who *washes out* EVERY spot and wrinkle, would not have left *unbelief.* . . . . Hence, proportionably to their election, they are said to be 'redeemed from among men,' (Rev. xiv. 4;) and '*redeemed out of* every kindred and tongue and people and nation,' (chap. v. 9.) Now, how is it *possible* that *all* men should be thus redeemed? Christ's death,

as it respects all men, redeems them (as I may so say) from among devils, for that it renders them capable of mercy, which devils are not; but Christ's death, as it respects the elect, redeems them even *from among men*, for that it procures faith for them, and thereby pulls them out of the unbelieving world; and what is *peculiar* redemption, if this be not?

"You will say, He would have fulfilled them [the *special* absolute promises] in all, but that men themselves will not; but what a strange word is this—*they will not!* Will they not, if God give them a will, a new heart and a new spirit? Will they not, if God take away the nilling and resisting principle, the heart of stone? Will they not, if God write His laws in their hearts and inward parts? Oh, what is this but an absurd blasphemy, to change God's truth into a lie, His omnipotence into weakness, and His glory into the old broken idol of creature-freedom? Surely if God, who is truth and power, engage to make a new heart, the old one cannot hinder it; if He promise to remove hardness, hardness cannot resist it. . . . . The Father's purpose, as the Scriptures hold forth, clearly was, that His Son should be a king, a captain, a shepherd, a husband, a head, and a father; and what is a king without subjects, a captain without soldiers, a shepherd without a flock, a husband without a spouse, a head without a body, and a father without posterity? Empty names are below Him whose *name is above every name.* Wherefore this king must have a Sion, *a mountain of holiness* to reign in, (Ps. ii. 6.) This captain a militia, *an army with banners* to fight under Him, (Cant. vi. 4.) This shepherd a flock *to hear His voice and follow Him*, (John x. 4.) This husband a spouse, *a queen in gold of Ophir married to him*, (Ps. xlv. 9.) This head *a body to be animated with His Spirit and filled with His life*, (Col. i. 18.) And this father a numerous issue, begotten and brought forth into the spiritual world to honour and serve Him, (Heb. ii. 13.) . . . . Indeed, there is no man living on the earth, but, if he did really believe, he should have *the rivers of living water, the spirit of holiness, flowing in his heart*, (John vii. 38;) but the elect were destined and *chosen in Christ to be holy*, (Eph. i. 4,) and Christ sanctified himself in a special manner for them, *that they might be sanctified* (ἐν ἀληθείᾳ) *in truth*, actually and truly, (John xvii. 19.) . . . . Others may have heaven upon believing, but these *shall certainly arrive* at it; these are *the sheep*, to which Christ gives eternal life, (John x. 28;)

these are *the sons* which without fail shall be brought to glory, (Heb. ii. 10.) Some men do believe, when others draw back, and whence comes this distinguishing faith? Either it comes merely of man's free-will, or of God's free grace: if we say the first, it is the very mire and dirt of Pelagianism, it is to set up free-will as an idol, to cast lots upon Christ's blood, whether any one person in the world shall be saved thereby or not; if we say the latter, then God and Christ had a *special* eye upon some above others; for God ordained that Christ should be the grand *medium* to salvation, and that faith should be the only way to Christ. If then He gave Christ for all, and faith but to some, it is because He did in a *special* way *intend* their salvation, and consequently Christ (who came to do His Father's will) had in His death a *special* respect to them. Wherefore I will shut up all with that of an ancient:—'*Although Christ died for all, yet for us He suffered in an* ESPECIAL *manner, because for the Church He suffered.*'"*

§ 15. "I demand," says Dr Whitby, "when they say Christ died for all, so far as to procure pardon and salvation for them *if they will believe and repent*, whether He died to procure pardon and salvation on a condition which it was *possible*, upon that assistance which He would vouchsafe them, to perform; or only upon a condition which to them was *impossible*, for want of grace sufficient for them, to perform? If the latter only, it is certain that He died not at all for them; for what is only done on an impossible supposition is not done at all." Were the doctrine contained in this objection admitted, a doctrine with which every part of our author's book abounds, it would at once remove all just views of moral obligation; and prove subversive of religion both natural and revealed. Only reflect, if to love God supremely, for instance, be a duty incumbent on a rational being, as such, through every state of his existence; if in every state he has *capacity*, *means*, and *freedom* so to love Him, as the ground of the obligation; if the very idea of accountableness implies a liableness to break that obligation; and if, moreover, a moral aptitude to obey is weakened by disobedience, it irrefragably follows, that the obligation of that being to love God is not in proportion to the *degree* of *possibility* of performance. Besides, at the *very time* that a

* Polhill on the Divine Will, pp. 322-346. "Etsi Christus *pro omnibus* mortuus est, *pro nobis* tamen *specialiter* passus est, quia pro ecclesia passus est."—*Ambros.*, lib. vi., Luc., cap. vii.

wicked man *hates* God, is he not *obliged* to *love* Him? And yet this is confessedly *impossible*. When a man is in a violent fit of passion, is he not under obligation of being temperate, mild, and meek, however impossible the compliance? To introduce the consideration of *grace*—"for want of grace sufficient for them"—is totally impertinent; for to say that a man is not *obliged* except he has *grace*, is little short of a contradiction in terms. At this rate, the more indisposed men are, through custom in the practice of iniquity, the more excusable; and without grace they are not obliged at all. That is, the *more* a man hates his Maker, the *less* obliged he is to love Him!

"It hath been represented as a great absurdity to think that Christ died *equally* for Judas and for Peter; but without any show of reason that I can discern: for did not the soul of Judas as much proceed from the *Father of spirits* as the soul of Peter? Was it not equally made after God's image."* But if God was bound in equity, that is, obliged at all, to shew favour to Judas as much as to Peter, because the *offspring* of God, and made after His *image*, we may say that *Satan* is entitled to an equal share. "Did it [the soul of Judas] come out of His [God's] hands *more unworthy of mercy* than the soul of Peter?" The phrase, "unworthy of mercy," if it has any meaning at all, conveys an absurd meaning. That mercy, which is a branch of grace, is conferred according to worthiness, is contradictory language. "Were not both born in equal circumstances as to God's favour, in equal need of a Saviour, and equally capable of redemption?" Granted, in equal need, and equally capable; and equal also as to God's favour in point of *claim*: but how does this imply that God is *bound* to shew no difference as a sovereign? "Why, therefore, antecedently to any good or evil they had done, should this Saviour die more or rather for the one than for the other?" It is granted that the Saviour died neither more nor rather for the one than for the other, as a *mean* of salvation, as a *medium of moral government;* but does it follow that this mean *must not* be rendered effectual to Peter rather than to Judas? If both alike refuse compliance with the proffered mercy, is it inequitable that one should be "made willing in the day of Divine power?"

"To make Christ procure both the promise and the condition, by the same act and passion, is to turn *the conditional* covenant

* Discourse, p. 105.

into one that is *absolute;* for what is procured already for me, God is *in equity bound* to give me without my doing anything to procure it." This objection absurdly supposes that the Christian covenant requires of us the performance of a condition *without* gracious aids; otherwise the objector must allow that the efficacy of the condition is procured as all gracious aids are, which invalidates the objection. In reality, the same covenant is absolute in one respect, while conditional in another. In virtue of Christ's atonement, an *absolute testamentary grant* is made to all who hear the gospel; which is "glad tidings of great joy to all people," But the salutary *possession* of the blessings themselves depends, as far as the equity of moral government is concerned, on the condition of accepting the favours thus proposed. And yet, *in fact,* if the condition itself were not made effectual by sovereign grace, not one soul would ever be saved. Thus Christ as Mediator procures *means* of salvation for all; but as a Surety bestows the *grace* of faith and repentance. He shed His *blood* with the rectoral design of saving *sinners;* He bestows His quickening *Spirit* on *elect* sinners only, who also were the objects especially regarded in His atoning death. *What is procured for me, God is in equity bound to give me.* Yes, God is bound to execute His wise and gracious purposes, without my leave! Or, He graciously appointed a propitiatory sacrifice, by virtue of which the Priest who offered it might claim the application of that sacrifice, with respect to me for whom He became surety, without waiting for my fulfilment of the condition in my own strength! A glorious truth this, in the belief of which every one who has made even but a small proficiency in self-knowledge will exult.

"If Christ hath absolutely procured this faith and repentance for the elect, they cannot be *conditions* to be performed on their part, but to be *given* on God's part."* This objection is founded on a great fallacy—viz., that the same thing cannot be, in different respects, both a *gift* and a *duty.* Christ is exalted to *give* repentance unto Israel, as well as the remission of sins; but to *repent* is theirs, whether we consider it under the notion of a duty or a condition. We are said to be saved by grace, through *faith,* and *that* not of ourselves, but the *gift* of God; nevertheless, the act of *believing* is ours, whether you call it a duty or a condition. The *ability,* or gracious principle, is from God; but the *act itself,*

* Discourse, p. 109.

whether it be repenting, believing, hoping, rejoicing, or any other gracious act, is *ours*. Were not the former true, who could be saved? And without the latter, there would be no moral character in actions, and how should God judge the world?

§ 16. "Either God gives this supposed purchase of faith and repentance to the elect by a peculiar, Divine, and irresistible assistance, or only by such aid and grace as is *common* to them with others who are not elected. If by the latter only, then is there nothing purchased more for them than for others with them, because nothing more is given to them than what is common to them with others; if by an assistance which is peculiar to them, and cannot be resisted by them, then are not any others to be charged with guilt for not repenting and believing, because it is impossible that they should do so without that special and irresistible assistance which God will not vouchsafe unto them; and so they do not believe and repent, not because they *will not* do what they could do, but because they *cannot* do it, were they never so willing." * This is but a *specimen* of passages unnumbered to the same purpose in our author's book before me—a specimen, however, of extreme misrepresentation. *If by an assistance which is peculiar, then others are not chargeable with guilt.* This inference, urged so frequently, has been refuted before, and stands on the gratuitous assumption that in the present case the ground of obligation is the *moral ability*, and not the *moral means* for the performance of duty. Strange, that none are chargeable with guilt if they have not that *peculiar* grace! But *why* are they not chargeable with guilt? *Because it is impossible that they should repent and believe without special assistance.* How *impossible? not because they* WILL NOT, *but because they* CANNOT, *were they never so willing.* Abhorred be the thought by me which is here falsely ascribed to Calvinism. I believe it is pretty uniformly maintained by Calvinists, that there is a very important distinction to be made between *moral* and *natural* inability, and that the *moral only* is culpable. The very reverse, therefore, is the true statement: *not because they* CANNOT, *were they never so willing, but because they* WILL NOT. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." "For it is God who worketh in us *to will*" what is good. The immediate influence of grace is on the *disposition*, the source of all voluntary actions; were *this*, there-

* Discourse, p. 109.

fore, always good, there would be no mistake in those actions. So far are we from supposing that the *impossibility* of believing and repenting should be resolved into a "CANNOT, *were they never so willing*," that we suppose what is diametrically opposite—viz., that the *only* effect of gracious *peculiar influence* is the removal of a *moral* inability, and not a *natural*,—a *will not* more properly than a *cannot*. If any grace *short* of what is peculiar to some, or special, were *in fact* sufficient, even in any one instance, to effect a *willingness* of mind,—that is, a mind *willing* in proportion to its *natural* ability,—there would be some force in our author's objection; but as neither Scripture nor right reason do justify such an inference, to deny *special* grace is the same as to deny that there are such things as *repenting* and *believing* in the world. Who ever could or can produce an *instance* of a sinner actually repenting and believing for salvation without *peculiar* influence? What Scripture, what reason, can encourage such a conclusion? However, it is added:—

"Faith being an assent to a Divine testimony upon sufficient evidence, without which evidence we cannot assent to it, and when we have it we cannot but assent, to say this faith requires on God's part a special, Divine, and irresistible assistance, proper to the elect, is to excuse all others from believing, as having no sufficient evidence to do so, although the gospel is as well revealed to them as it is to the elect."* What sophistical quibbling upon the terms "*sufficient evidence!*" Faith is, indeed, "an assent to a Divine testimony upon *sufficient evidence*, without which evidence we *cannot* assent to it;" but the *evidence* itself, and the *sufficiency* of it, are *objective* only in this definition, else it has no meaning but what is most absurd. That evidence which is *insufficient* for faith, and by reason of which man is *excusable*, is an *objective defect*, concerning which a man may *truly* say, "I *cannot* believe if I *would*, for I have no rational ground of belief: the thing I am required to believe is not *credible*." But if he declares only what he *thinks* to be insufficient evidence, when to a more upright mind it appears to be sufficient, as it *really* is, who can suppose that his *thinking* it to be insufficient will *excuse* him? What can be plainer than that our Lord's *miracles* were a "*sufficient* evidence" *objectively* for the conviction of the Jews who believed not; though *subjectively*, or as evidence existing in their minds, they were in-

* Discourse, p. 110.

sufficient? But could they justly plead *excuse* for want of the latter? How absurd to imagine it! *When we have sufficient evidence, we cannot but assent.* Here the terms "sufficient evidence" must needs be taken in a quite different sense from that which they occupied a little before. When we have sufficient *subjective* evidence, it is true we cannot but assent; but the want of *this* is no excuse, else there could be no such thing as criminal infidelity. The idea of *special grace being conferred on some excusing others,* is too impertinent to deserve a refutation. Pardon and life are proposed to all; all are of themselves averse to the proposal; but if some are *made willing* by an operation *peculiar* to them, in the name of everything logical and everything sacred, how can this be a ground of excuse for the aversion or *unwillingness* of the others?

§ 17. It is urged:—"When the kindness designed by Christ's death to all upon the conditions of the gospel is expressed, it is said Christ died for all; so when the effect and benefit of it is expressed, the word *many* is most proper; for His blood shed procures remission of sins only to *penitent believers,* and in this sense Christ gave His life a ransom only for many, even as many as would believe and obey His gospel."* Not to insist on the apparent impropriety of supposing that the word "*many*" expresses, not the objects whose *peculiar* advantages were decretively intended by the death of Christ, but those who performed certain *conditions,* and thereby partook of its effects,—as if the *extent* of the *ransom* depended on an *after* condition,—the chief question here is, From what *source* proceed the *light* and *love,* the subjective evidence and willingness, in virtue of which the required condition is fulfilled? Of what use is it to contend for a *condition,* which, though not *naturally* impossible, it is morally certain no one ever did or will perform, but as influenced supernaturally? It is demonstrable, from considerations that need not now be adduced, that if the condition of *believing, repenting,* and *obeying* be performed at all, it is by *Divine assistance;* and seeing that assistance is not calculated to remove any *natural* but only a *moral* imbecility, the supposed assistance of what our author styles "common grace," which does not produce the *moral effect,* does not appear to have any existence, for *de non apparentibus et de non existentibus eadem valet ratio.* If the genuine effects of a *principle* do

* Discourse, p. 113.

not appear, (and while no infallible testimony to the fact can be urged,) we are fairly authorised to conclude that no such principle exists.

"Though it be certain that Christ died *intentionally* for *all*,—*i.e.*, designing the benefits of His salutary passion for them, *upon their performance* of the conditions of the new covenant, established in His blood,—yet is it also true that He *eventually* is the Saviour of His body, and died *only* for His sheep and friends, because they only do perform the conditions of the new covenant; and therefore to them only can this righteous Judge at last assign the blessings promised in that covenant."* It is granted that Christ's intention, *rectorally*, was to die for all; and it is also agreed, that He *eventually*, (and therefore, I conclude, *decretively*, because the *event* in all cases, as far as it participates of goodness and entity, is an exact indication of a corresponding decree;)—Christ eventually is the Saviour of His body, and died *only* for His sheep and friends: who, in *fact*, perform the conditions of the new covenant, and to whom only the righteous Judge will assign the promised blessings. The remaining but very important difference therefore is, that the one side of the question ascribes the distinguishing effect to peculiar distinguishing grace; that is, to a cause which is adequate to the effect: while the other side ascribes it to a supposed grace that is not peculiar; that is, to an inadequate cause. In a word, the latter makes the greatest good and happiness of man, that which makes him *immediately* to differ from another, to originate in *himself;* but the former ascribes all valuable difference to *God*, whether ultimately or immediately, that which infallibly insures the right determination of the will not excepted.

But it is again asserted:—"If salvation by Christ can be obtained only by the elect, the residue of those to whom the gospel is revealed can have no *means sufficient* for salvation." And, "if men have not sufficient means to be saved by the covenant of grace, then have they only means given them to increase their condemnation, yea, such means which they *cannot but use* to their greater and more heavy punishment."† On the contrary, we insist that the *annunciation* and *proposal* of Christ, the blessings of redemption, and the completion thereof in life eternal, are *sufficient means* for salvation; and if we admit of the language, "they *cannot* but use them to their condemnation," it is precisely in the

* Discourse, p. 114. † Ibid., p. 161.

same sense as "they *will not.*" If a man were *of himself* but *willing* to improve the means, in that case, I acknowledge, a peculiar influence would be unnecessary; if he were well disposed to repent, believe, obey, and actually performed the conditions required, then special grace would be useless; but Scripture rightly understood, and the soundest principles of reason, are unacquainted with any such power in the human mind. We consider men as *unable* only in a *moral* sense, which is their *crime:* it is the inability of an atheistical scoffer, who says in his heart, There is no God; of a resolute deist, who pretends he has no sufficient evidence of the truth of revealed religion; of an obstinate Jew, who rejects with passionate abhorrence the religion and Messiahship of Jesus; of a man who sincerely loves the world in its maxims, customs, manners, and enjoyments, but *cannot* find it in his heart to love God,—that is, *will not* love Him. In a word, it is the inability of a man to love his neighbour as himself, when he has all the reasons conceivable for doing it: he has understanding and will, or the *capacity* of intellect and volition; he has commands and encouragements, the authority of God in the Old and New Testaments; he has every prospect of superior advantage by complying rather than refusing; he has every inducement from the character and conduct of his neighbour, a good, benevolent, generous man, who has conferred upon him many undeserved favours;—in short, he has moral *means* both suitable and sufficient for loving his neighbour as himself; and withal he possesseth full *freedom* to hate him or not; but notwithstanding *cannot* love him,—that is, the envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness of his heart are so strong that he *will not*, finds no *inclination* to compliance with duty, much less pleasure and delight in it. Is this man *criminal*, or is he not? If not, there is no such thing existing as a crime or a moral system; if he is, we ask no more, the objection is annihilated. If his condemnation is increased by the gospel, is it not also *increased* if he persists in acts of immorality against the remonstrances of conscience and *reason?* If a benevolent man undertakes to *reason* with his neighbour about the sinfulness, dangerous consequences, and numerous inconveniences of *drunkenness*, but this neighbour, notwithstanding, does not submit to the evidence produced, nor abandon his evil courses; but it is plain that, on the one hand, the benevolence of the reprover is not lessened by the ill success that followed his endeavours, and, on

the other, the condemnation of the obstinate offender is increased; —in no other sense do we consider the *inability* of a man to repent and believe; an inability which the greater it is, the more means, motives, or inducements it is capable of resisting, the more criminal. But one of the most plausible objections is the following:—

§ 18. "Sure it is no sin in the creature not to do that which can alone be done by the almighty power of God, and which cannot be done without that proper act of God He never would afford to them; for then it must be the sin of man not to be God,—for not being equal in power with God himself. Then must every impenitent and unbelieving person have a just excuse, and a sufficient plea why he should not be punished, or condemned for his iniquity and unbelief; and they might cry to God as did the officers of the Jews to Pharaoh, 'Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw, and thou sayest to us, Make bricks:' no special grace, no Divine energy afforded us, and Thou sayest to us, Do that, which can no more be done without it than men can make bricks without straw, and *Thy servants are beaten, but the fault is in Him* who denies us straw, and yet requires bricks; yea, who requires that faith and that repentance which He never would afford us *means sufficient* to perform." * However plausible this objection may appear to the unwary, it is nevertheless fraught with genuine absurdities:—

(1.) It is involved in that very absurd consequence which it would unjustly fix on the doctrine of special grace—viz., that man must be equal in power with God himself. It has been before demonstrated that a power of doing good in the creature is not inherent but *borrowed;* which arises from our absolute dependence upon God in *operation* as well as being. But the objection supposes that we have *some power* which is *not* borrowed, otherwise *all power* and the *cause* of *every good* would be ascribed to Him. Real power belongs only to the independent God. Whereas, absolute universal dependence—passive power tending to defection and nihility, on the one hand, and an obediential power adapted to receive any Divine impression, on the other—is essential to a creature. Therefore, to require in man a *source of power* to believe, repent, &c., without the immediate influence and efficiency of God, is to require that in him which is peculiar to God; that is, equality in power with God himself.

* Discourse, p. 163.

(2.) The objection supposes that in order to render man accountable, he should possess in *himself* an expedient whereby he may avoid the inconveniences attending past transgression. It seems, if by sin he has brought upon himself such a moral impotence as prevents his believing and repenting, he is not chargeable with unbelief and impenitence! What is this but to say, Men may sin with impunity; or, Men are not accountable except God *removes* their moral impotence by His grace! This is in effect to cavil at, not so much some particular tenets of Christianity, as the right of God to form a strictly equitable moral system. For to such a system, *liableness* to sin is essential; and to sin belongs guilt, moral impotence, and natural evil: but to say, as the objection implies, that a man is not *culpable* in not loving God, for instance, without *grace* to remove his moral depravity, is an absurdity beneath contempt.

(3.) Not less futile is the comparison between God's conduct, on our hypothesis, towards sinners, and that of Pharaoh towards the oppressed Israelites. Our author is peculiarly fond of this allusion, for he elsewhere says, "God's grace, they say, is free, and He is not obliged to give it. I answer, this is true, if He doth not require that which *cannot* be performed without it; but to exact what I can never do without it under the most dreadful penalties, and yet deny that *grace*, is to act like those Egyptian taskmasters, who called for brick when they allowed no straw." * The objection intended by this comparison supposes that God requires of sinners what He gives them no *sufficient means* of performing. But how glaring is the misrepresentation here made of our hypothesis! Do our sentiments, fairly stated, imply any *deficiency* of *moral means* to those who are not the subjects of special grace? No such thing. They are *equally* partakers of moral inducements; equally the objects of commands and threatenings, invitations and promises: to them as well as others are representations made of heaven and hell, blessing and cursing, happiness and woe. Surely, if a man persists in his unbelief and impenitence after being told plainly, reasoned with, encouraged, warned, and threatened concerning his present danger and future fate, is it not most *equitable* that he should suffer what he so disregarded? Does not conscience witness that he *deserves* to be miserable? Can he expect to be spared who does not spare himself? or to be saved, who neglects

* Discourse, p. 190.

so great salvation? Can he justly hope for heaven whose conscience testifies that he made light of it when proposed to him?

(4.) If the plea of the objection were valid, another absurd consequence would follow—viz., that the damned in hell might have it in their power to justify all their hatred of God and their blasphemies. God *requires* of them the contrary tempers; otherwise there would be no crimes, that is, there would be no bad tempers in hell, no state answering to that name. But if there are those odious tempers in devils and human spirits who people the regions of despair, and if God requires the *opposite* tempers of all the subjects of His moral government, as He certainly does, what a pity they do not appoint a delegate to present the following declaration:—"Wherefore dealest Thou thus with Thy servants? there is no straw given us, and Thou sayest to us, Make bricks; no special grace, no Divine energy afforded us, and Thou sayest to us, Do that, which can no more be done without it than men can make bricks without straw, and Thy servants are beaten, but the fault is in *Him* who denies us straw, and yet requires bricks." On reflection I am persuaded there is not a demon in hell (whatever liberties we mortals take) that could venture to present it as the dictate of his real feelings.

§ 19. Not much better is the following plea:—"Should a physician come to a patient, whose stomach was so weakened through his intemperance or lust, that it could bear no strong meat, and his feet so enfeebled that he could scarce walk from his couch to his bedside, and profess an earnest desire to cure his distempers, and promise him recovery, provided he would follow his prescriptions, might it not reasonably be expected he should prescribe such means for his recovery that it was *possible* for him in this condition to make use of? If then he should enjoin him to eat, and to digest the strongest meats, and walk some hours in the fields, because he formerly could do so before he fell into this disability and feebleness, would not all men pronounce him a deluding cheat, and one that hypocritically and insincerely pretended his recovery, and promised it with equal vanity and folly, intending only to insult over his present misery? And yet this is the representation of our gracious God in this affair which these men offer to us."* So then God and His righteous law, submissive, must bow to the depraved *inclination* of the transgressor! According to this

* Discourse, p. 167.

wonderfully complaisant doctrine, Pharaoh, Judas, Demas, &c., were *obliged* no further than they were *well disposed* to obey; and because pride, covetousness, and love of the world, had *disabled* them, it was quite *wrong* to require of them faith in God's testimony, and repentance for their crimes; for why? this was to "enjoin them to eat, and to digest the strongest meats," which they were *unable*, that is, indisposed or *unwilling* to do. The real fact is, that our author here, as everywhere else, most injudiciously and unfairly confounds natural and moral impotence, and then argues from the one to the other; not reflecting, that corporeal diseases deserve our pity, as what the patient cannot avoid *if he would*; but mental diseases, as pride, unbelief, impenitence, hatred of God, and the love of sin, deserve our *detestation*, because *if they would*, men might avoid them. Christ has died, and the Spirit is offered to them through His mediation; but they out of deliberate choice obstinately refuse the kindly intended benefits—*whose damnation is just.*

§ 20. It is again urged:—"We find our blessed Saviour marvelling at the unbelief of His own people; for 'He marvelled at their unbelief.' Now, can He who knows they could not believe by reason of the disability they had contracted by the sin of Adam, wonder that they did not what it was *impossible* for them to do? Again, when He heard the answer of the centurion, 'He marvelled, saying, Verily I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel;' but *if this faith*, whenever it is wrought in any, *is the effect of an almighty power*, what reason could He have to marvel that it *was* found where that almighty power was exerted, or that it was *not* found where the same power was withheld?" Of all the absurd objections contained in this magazine of genuine Arminianism, none need be more so than the present. According to this objection, *miracles* are not to be *marvelled* at, but should be regarded with an eye of *indifference!* In reply to this objection, observe—

(1.) We consider faith, as a branch of the Divine *life*, or as a *gift*, in the class of those interpositions of God that may well be termed *miraculous;* but as a *duty*, or the voluntary *exertion* of that life, it may naturally be *expected* where the Divine testimony is most explicit, and the means of grace most abundant. Thus God of old:—"Now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What

could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"* Thus the fruits of righteousness were not according to the *means* afforded, which was the proper ground of criminality. That the daughter of Zion, who had been betrothed unto the Lord in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies, should go after Baalim, burn incense to them, and forget Jehovah, was a fact comparatively *marvellous*. So here, it was a thing greatly to be *marvelled* at, that the *Jews*, to whom were committed the *oracles* of God, who were Israelites, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the *testaments*, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose were the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, —that *these* people, so highly privileged, should *disbelieve* a testimony supported by such evidence; while the *centurion*, a heathen soldier, who had no such privileges, exhibited a fact no less marvellous in receiving with humble readiness what they haughtily rejected.

(2.) The objection is founded on the unscriptural, unreasonable, we may add, ungrateful notion, that *faith* as a grace, or the life of God in the soul, is *not* the effect of an almighty power. What can be more opposite to the whole current of revealed truth? The true Christian temper, which is the root of faith, is (*καινὴ κτίσις*) *a new creation*;† a new birth, a *birth from heaven*, the effect of sovereign almighty energy;‡ the produce of (*ἡ ὑπερβολὴ τῆς δυνάμεως*) *the excellency of power*;§ a power similar to that which created the world, and caused the light to shine out of darkness; a power not less *miraculous*, or superior to the common laws of nature and unaided influence of moral means, than the resurrection from the dead.‖ It appears to me not a little paradoxical, that any should *admit* of an almighty power to be exerted in raising the *body* to future life,—an exertion totally different from that which preserves and gives energy to the mechanism of the universe, or established general laws of matter and motion, causes and effects,—and yet *deny* the need of such a power to raise the *soul* to spiritual life and happiness. They who cavil at the doctrines of grace, as explained by the orthodox, and yet believe

* Isa. v. 3, 4. † 2 Cor. v. 17. ‡ John iii. 3, 5, 8.
§ 2 Cor. iv. 7. ‖ John v. 24–27.

the resurrection of the body, may well be said *to strain out a gnat and swallow down a camel.* But a fuller discussion of this point belongs to the next head of discourse, to which we now proceed.

§ 21. THIRDLY, *Special grace.* Notwithstanding the contemptuous manner in which Dr Whitby speaks of *faith* as "the effect of an almighty power;" when treating of *sufficient and effectual, common and special grace,* he makes the following concession: —"Besides this calling of men to the profession of the Christian faith, and this vouchsafement of the gospel to them as a rule of life, it seems necessary to assert that God vouchsafes *some inward operations or assistances to incline them to what is good, and work conversion in them;*" * and, what is still more extraordinary, he produceth several passages of Scripture in favour of that assertion. But, alas! all this parade of concessions and proofs is followed by numberless flagrant contradictions. What he builds with one hand he pulls down with the other; and that with violence. What he before called "*inward operations*" are now nothing more than God's *exhortations.* One while it is conceded that there is a Divine illumination, a Divine impression on the mind, and God speaking inwardly to man; but before you are aware, all is converted into moral persuasion. Let us hear his own words:—"I assert that the *manner* in which God's grace and Holy Spirit acts upon the minds and hearts of men for production of the fruits of the good Spirit, and the preparatory dispositions of the soul towards them, may reasonably be conceived to be such as is *suitable* to the reason and faculties of men, the understanding and the will." Granted; for who would plead for a mode of operation which is *unsuitable?* "Now it is certain that what naturally *makes the understanding to perceive* is *evidence proposed and apprehended,* considered or adverted to;"—but who makes the blind to see or the dull to apprehend?—"for nothing else can be requisite to make us come to the knowledge of the truth, and so be wise to salvation. . . . Again, what makes the *will choose* is something *approved* by the understanding, and consequently appearing to the soul as *good;* and whatsoever it *refuseth,* is something represented by the understanding, and so appearing to the will, as *evil:* whence all that God requires of us is, and can be only this, *to refuse the evil and to choose the good.* . . . It therefore can be only requisite, in order to these ends, that the good Spirit should *so illu-*

* Discourse, p. 206.

minate our understandings, that we attending to, and considering what lies before us, should apprehend, and be convinced of our duty; and that the blessings of the gospel should be *so propounded* to us, as that we may discern them to be our chiefest good, and the miseries it threateneth, so as we may be convinced they are the worst of evils, that we may choose the one and refuse the other." * But observe what follows:—"Is it not *a great disparagement of the word of God* to say, or think, that all His persuasions, admonitions, exhortations, promises, and threats, should be *insufficient* to prevail with us to turn from our sinful courses, and turn to Him, when men who use these methods towards their children, servants, friends, or relations, do it in hopes that they shall be successful by these means?" † "If beyond all this, there be some *physical and unfrustrable operation on God's part* requisite to make men know, and, knowing, choose the good and refuse the evil,—this being not vouchsafed to, or wrought in them who are not born anew,—*why is the want of this new birth*, and this spiritual regeneration so often *imputed to the voluntary want of their consideration*, and their not laying to heart the things propounded to them?" ‡ "I therefore humbly conceive that inward operation of the Holy Spirit to consist in these two things:—

"(1.) In representing the Divine truths which Holy Scriptures do contain, and press upon us, more clearly to our understandings, that we may have a fuller evidence, stronger conviction, and assurance of them.

"(2.) In bringing these truths to our remembrance, that so they may be present with us when this is requisite to enable us to resist temptations, and to encourage us to the performance of our duty." §

The above-cited extracts contain a summary of the *Arminian* system of grace, which is hardly anything different from the *Pelagian*. I shall now present the reader with a concise account of the *orthodox* doctrine on the same point, that he may the more easily compare their pretensions:—"Effectual calling is the work of God's almighty power and grace, whereby, out of His free and especial love to His elect, and from nothing in them moving Him thereunto, He doth, in His accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ by His word and Spirit; savingly enlightening their

* Discourse, pp. 210–212. † Ibid., p. 214.
‡ Ibid., p. 218. § Ibid., p. 220.

minds, renewing and powerfully determining their wills, so as they, although in themselves dead in sin, are hereby made willing and able freely to answer His call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein."* It cannot help occurring to the attentive and intelligent reader, that the *former* summary is ultimately to this position—viz., what grace effects in a sinner's conversion is nothing more than to *represent to the mind Divine truths by way of moral persuasion;* while the *disposition* itself, or the *ability* to apprehend, consider, and advert to the truths objectively presented, is left uninfluenced. Whereas the *latter*, allowing the use but denying the sufficiency of moral means, maintains the absolute need of a *physical influence of the Holy Spirit on the disposition itself, whereby it is made spiritual and holy*, in its measure conformable to the holy nature of God; and without which no representation of truth, no moral persuasion whatever, will terminate in that change which is connected with salvation. *That*, after abstracting what is common to the converted and unconverted, is reducible to the *self-sufficiency* of the human will; *this*, to the *special influence* and sovereign pleasure of God. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," without consulting thy pleasure, "and thou hearest the sound thereof," the effects are sensibly known, "but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth," its manner of operation is not perceived by thee; "so is every one that is born of the Spirit."† Having thus given the true state of the question in dispute, what now remains is to examine Dr Whitby's principal objections against the Calvinistic side, especially in reference to anything that might appear inconsistent with equity.

§ 22. "It must be granted, that in raising an idea in my brain by the Holy Spirit, and the impression made upon it there, the action is truly physical;—that in those actions I am wholly passive; that is, I myself do nothing formally to produce their ideas, but the good Spirit, without my operation, doth produce them in me;—and that these operations must be irresistible in their production, because they are immediately produced in us without our knowledge of them, and without our will, and so without those faculties by which we are enabled to act. But then I add, that as far as they are so, they cannot be imputed to us; that is,

* Larger Catechism of the Assembly, ans. to quest. 67.

† John iii. 8.

it cannot be praiseworthy in us, or rewardable, that we have such ideas raised in us, but only that when they are thus raised in us we attend to them, comply with them, and improve them to the ends for which they were designed by the Holy Spirit. . . . . Those ideas which are objectively good being thus raised in us, cannot be imputed to us for reward, nor can God be well pleased with us for them till we co-operate with them, because the raising of them is properly God's, not our own action, and we are purely passive in it, nor is it in our power to prevent or resist them; but then God having planted in us a principle of reason and discretion, we can attend to them when they are raised in us, and so improve them to the illumination of our understandings, and to the approbation of them in our minds: He also having given us a will to choose the good, and to refuse the evil, we may consent to the good suggestions and pursue the good motions thus raised in us; for to what other ends can they be raised in us by the Holy Spirit?"* In reply to this very singular passage, I observe the following things:—

(1.) If this account be anything different from the mechanism of nature, or the doctrine of associations, it is not only unscriptural, but also highly unphilosophical. He cannot mean *that* doctrine, because he treats of *grace*, a Divine impulse, superior to the course of nature, effected by the *Holy Spirit*. Besides, it would have been absurd to introduce the doctrine of *common providence* (of which *associations* make a part) under the title of *sufficient grace*. And yet, if anything be intended by our author more than common providence, the sentiment is unphilosophical as well as unscriptural, and wholly destitute of all probability. It supposes innumerable supernatural interpositions, and so *multiplies* principles, which the proposed effect does *not require*. What is the proposed effect? To give us *ideas* of truths. And what are ideas but *representations* in the mind of *objective archetypes?* But to suppose that any *other truths* or objective archetypes are *now* necessary than what the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain, is to run into a labyrinth of mysticism and extravagance. If what we call our ideas of religious truths are not representations of objects exhibited in the Holy Scriptures, they are unworthy of the name, as being either the deductions of unassisted reason or the reveries of fancy. When Dr Whitby,

* Discourse, p. 221.

therefore, talked of *an idea raised in his brain by the Holy Spirit, and the impression made upon it there*, he talked of a figment of his own creation, and created for no other purpose than to throw it as dust into weak eyes.

(2.) Seeing it is something different from a natural and providential law that he speaks of, the sentiment supposes millions of miracles, daily and hourly, without answering any valuable end. No other end is pretended to be answered but that of giving each person an opportunity of exerting his freedom; but this he has by attending to the Holy Scriptures, which are sufficient archetypes of all ideas relating to salvation, and without which he has no authority to conclude that his ideas are from God. If the revealed word exhibits life and immortality, grace and glory, to every soul that hears or peruses it, and this renders men inexcusable, nay, is a *sufficient mean* of salvation, what need is there of compassing the very same end by millions of miracles?

(3.) The above doctrine confounds revelation and the Divine unction. The prophets and apostles, it is true, must have had representations made in their minds of things not contained in preceding scriptures; but the unction from the Holy One teacheth us all things by changing the disposition only. Nothing more is necessary; nothing less is a cause adequate to the effect. Besides, if the *ne plus ultra* of grace be only to impress *ideas*, (which is a mode of operation, I believe, perfectly unintelligible, when supernatural revelation is not intended,) it is possible that not one sinner would be saved; for, on the supposition, the Holy Spirit engages to do nothing more to one sinner than another, and as *one* fails of salvation, for the same reason *all* might. And who can tell but the prophets and apostle have *suppressed* innumerable ideas given them by the Holy Spirit to be revealed to us? For on our author's principles it would not be *just* to engage their *wills* respecting any *ideas*. Such is the genuine but wretched result of his novel *cerebrosian* hypothesis!

(4.) The above doctrine, moreover, is very uncharitable in its consequences. If all that the Holy Spirit does towards our salvation is merely "to raise ideas in the brain," what becomes of little children? Are none of them saved? If they are, does not the Divine Spirit prepare them for glory? But how? Is it by *raising ideas in their brains*, leaving them to *choose* or to *refuse*, to improve them and live, or to neglect them and perish?

And, indeed, with respect to adults, the consequence would be equally deplorable, though not so glaringly ridiculous. If man in his best estate on earth is not supernaturally influenced in his *disposition*, no supposed objective light in the understanding, no "ideas raised in the brain," no persuasion, will effect a new birth unto righteousness. Without more assistance from the Holy Spirit than our author is willing to allow, and supposing, too, that a right use of ideas is necessary to salvation, all men must perish; for there is no *willing* that which is truly spiritual without such assistance. "He worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good thought," much less to will, improve ideas, to love and embrace the truth represented. No one of himself is *disposed* to co-operate with God, be the objective light and means ever so great, for this reason, that the mind being *depraved*, (as none can deny, however they may differ about the cause,) the *real* good, in whatever light it is represented, will not *appear* to be so. The cure, therefore, must be more inward and *radical*.

Besides, if God is bound in equity to deal alike with all His creatures by *impressing their brains*, it might be asked, on our author's own principles, how come such numbers to fall short of conversion. If it be said the impression was not strong enough to counteract their stronger depravity, how can they be blamed? Are they not left under the sad *necessity* of perishing because the impression was not *superior* to the opposing principle? That there is an *opposition* made is plain hence, that the Scriptures are not sufficient of themselves, Dr Whitby being judge, without the Holy Spirit performing "*an action truly physical*" on the *brain* in order to conversion. God, it seems, would not be *just* in condemning men without this unintelligible operation! In a word, to say that God is bound in *equity* to perform on men a supernatural action truly *physical*, is equally destitute of truth and sense; whereas it is expressive of both to say, that if men are converted and saved, there must be a physical change of the disposition by an act of sovereign favour, whereby the soul is enabled to improve its knowledge and all the means of salvation.

(5.) The sentiment I am opposing involves a great mistake about what is rewardable and praiseworthy, and what is not. It supposes that *actions alone* are so; whereas the truth is, that the *state*, the *disposition*, and *inclination* of the mind are not less

rewardable or blamable than our actions. Nay, actions are no further praiseworthy than as they proceed from such state of mind. Were it otherwise, how can we account for God's blaming men for hardness of heart, carnality of mind, stupidity of conscience, sensuality, and the like? And why promise to *change the heart,* and write His law there? In consideration of what praiseworthy and rewardable *actions* are infants admitted into everlasting bliss? Is it more difficult for Omnipotence to meliorate the heart of a sinner, whether young or old, than to raise ideas in his brain? Or must we say that it would be *inequitable?* The former none can assert; the latter is what none who admit of any *gracious* influence at all can consistently plead.

(6.) To conclude, in a few words: our author's hypothesis is a wretched limitation of Divine grace, which must not proceed to the *hearts* of sinners; a pillar to support pride, which disdains to ascribe to God what it fancies itself equal to; an edifice erected on a mistaken idea of moral obligation, as if a physical act of grace were necessary for its basis; and, finally, contains a contradiction in terms—God cannot be *just* in condemning sinners, except He give them *grace;* the grace of certain *ideas* impressed upon their brains!

§ 23. "Some Remonstrants, by granting this necessity of *supernatural* and *infused habits,* seem to have run themselves into this *dilemma,* that either these supernatural habits—viz., of faith and charity—may be wrought in men, and yet they may not be converted; or else that all who are not converted are *therefore* not converted, because God's Spirit hath not wrought these habits in them, which is the very absurdity they labour to avoid."* Who these *Remonstrants* referred to are it is needless to inquire; but why this *dilemma,* as it is called, should appear formidable to any, or its last horn be studiously avoided, I know not. What can be more reasonable than to allow that God's *act of grace* upon a sinner is an *infused supernatural habit?* Surely this is language more intelligible, and a work far more worthy of God, than what our opponent has advanced. And who would scruple to say, that "all who are not *converted* are *therefore* not converted, *because* God's Spirit hath not wrought these habits in them?" Because God does not work upon a sinner by a supernatural act of *grace,* is He therefore *unjust* in condemning him

* Discourse, p. 225.

for his *sins?* Is our moral obligation *wholly* founded on grace? Are men not bound to love God, and make Him their chief end, except they have supernatural aids? Have they not understandings, wills, moral means, (the Holy Scriptures, Divine institutions, &c.,) and unconstrained freedom?

"That any supernatural habits must be *infused* into us in an instant, and not *produced by frequent actions*, is that which *my hypothesis* by no means will allow. The ideas which He raises in us, though they are raised by a physical operation, yet are they moral in their operations: even as a man's tongue in speaking to persuade, or to dissuade another, performs a physical operation, though the effect of it is only moral."* Here, then, is an hypothesis that maintains, without blushing, the ability of the *natural man*, of the *carnal mind*, not only to *understand* but also to *receive* the things of the Spirit of God; nay, moreover, to produce in himself a *new nature* by his own actions! O rotten, wretched, proud Pelagianism, wilt thou not cease to pervert the good and gracious ways of the Lord?—*The ideas physically raised are moral in their effects.* This, it should seem, is the great advantage of the Arminian hypothesis. Who can avoid being prepossessed in favour of it from a circumstance so important? From the uncommon stress that is laid on this idea, it might appear natural to infer that the orthodox opinion is herein miserably deficient. But impartiality well informed must allow that *our* hypothesis, in this very point, has every advantage of which the other can boast. To illustrate this matter, let the following remarks be considered:—

§ 24. First, The doctrine of *infused habits* no more *supersedes* the use of means, than that of mere *moral suasion.* The former includes the latter, though the latter excludes the former. There is no argument whatever of real weight that an Arminian can urge with men, in order to their conversion or edification, but what a Calvinist may consistently use. By no legitimate consequence does it follow that, because God acts the part of a gracious Legislator and equitable Judge, in His dispensations and His word, He therefore cannot, by an act of sovereign grace, *enable* the sinner to *improve* means; especially when we consider the *absolute need* there is of such an operation, if any be *actually* persuaded to embrace the great salvation. The use of persuasion

* Discourse, p. 225.

supposes man as rational and accountable; beyond which God is not obliged in equity to go. Were *any one* to comply cordially with the Divine call, his compliance would be accepted, though he had no infused habit. Whence it follows, that when we plead for a *physical* influence on the *mind*, it is not merely a pleading for an *opinion* which appears to be countenanced by reason, and confirmed by Scripture, but it is, moreover, a question concerning *facts*. We say, with Scripture and experience, that all the children of men are actually degenerate. From the very nature of moral means, in connexion with moral depravity and guilt, we further conclude, that it is, *in fact*, clearly impossible for such means to effect the change agreed to be necessary, without a separate sovereign influence. And yet, if God treat with men as rational beings, accountable to Him for their talents,—if He do not altogether dissolve the moral system of our world, mortal means *must* be used.

Secondly, Though moral suasion (being, like the law, "weak through the flesh") does not effect a saving change without the Holy Spirit, yet the *disposition* itself, being made good by a physical change, is *moral* in its *operations*. To judge, desire, and love spiritually, to repent, believe, and obey, are all *moral* operations, while yet *effects* of a *physical* change. Is the *act* of any being, whether perfect or imperfect, *less moral* because the previous disposition is the work of God? We may as well question whether the act of hearing is *ours*, because God planted the ear; or the act of seeing *ours*, because God formed the eye; that holy confidence is *ours*, because "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" is the previous inspiring cause of that confidence.

Thirdly, All *means*, as far as they are operative, are, according to our principles, *moral* in their *effects*. Whatever object is presented to the understanding, to the will, or any faculty of the mind, it operates *morally* and not *physically*, by *persuasion* and not *mechanism*, though the effect be not contingent as to God. A *certainty* in the *effect* is perfectly consistent with the *morality* of the *operation*. To ascertain the former, it is enough to know the *disposition*, its exact degree of goodness or pravity. Does a pure stream flow from a corrupt fountain? Does a good tree, *continuing* such, bear bad fruit? Does not the infinite goodness of God render it absolutely certain that He will do nothing amiss? Or,

is there any probability that infernal spirits, confirmed in wickedness, will perform benevolent deeds? Is not the probability of any means being properly improved, and good actions performed, exactly in proportion to the *disposition* of the agent? Two persons take up the sacred volume, or hear its contents: to the one the Divine testimony is a savour of life, to the other of death; one deems what he reads or hears the highest wisdom, the other uninteresting truth, or perhaps insipid folly. Supposing, also, with our author, that God does as much for the one as the other, by making some *equal* impressions, how shall we be able rationally to account for the difference of the *effect*, but by allowing a proportionable difference of disposition? When a good and gracious effect, therefore, is intended to be produced, our author's hypothesis of a *physical impress on the* BRAIN is needless; a supernatural agency on the *mind*, whereby it is *made good*, is alone wanted.

If it be said, that the mind being *free* still implies the means *may* be frustrated; and how can this consist with the certainty of the effect? it is granted that a state of probation, without the intervention of preserving grace, does imply, that *all means* whatever *may* be frustrated; but from thence it does not follow, that infused grace will not prevent sinful acts, on the one hand, or will destroy freedom on the other. Goodness of disposition *continued* will infallibly produce good acts, but if left in equity, the reverse. And freedom in its own nature does not consist in an equal indifference to good and evil, else the goodness of God, and the grace of the blessed in heaven, would be no *advantage* against transgression. He who *acts from rational motives* without constraint is free, though there should be a *million to one* that his choice and action should be one way rather than another, owing to the state and disposition of the agent; yea, by parity of reason, an *infinite* number to one, so as to afford him who fully understands the case an *absolute certainty* of the event.

§ 25. But it is again urged:—"If such a Divine unfrustrable operation is necessary to the conversion of a sinner, then the *word* read or preached can be no *instrument* of their conversion without this Divine unfrustrable impulse, because *that* only acts by moral suasion; only this is not so to be understood as to exclude the co-operation of God with His word, or the assistance of His Holy Spirit setting it home upon our hearts, provided this be not by

way of *physical* and not *moral* operation."* Is this anything more than a bare assertion, that the *instrumentality* of the word is of itself sufficient to convert a sinner by way of moral suasion, with a *salvo* apparently orthodox, but in reality without any determinate meaning, that the Spirit *assists* in *setting it home upon our hearts.*

Pelagians and Arminians are not the only persons who express themselves in similar language: there are many others who, without any design of degrading the glorious work of the Spirit, indulge a mode of expression not easily reconciled with their principles. This being the case, I could wish to offer such a reply to the objection of Arminians as at the same time refutes the mistakes of those who are Calvinistic in other points. And this, I think, is done satisfactorily in the language of a very respectable and judicious writer. He is discoursing of the principle of *grace,* concerning which he observes, that "it is *infused,* and not *acquired.* The first principle or spring of good actions may, with equal reason, be supposed to be infused into us, as Christians, as it is undoubtedly true that the principle of reasoning is infused into us as men. None ever supposed that the natural power of reasoning may be acquired; so that power whereby we are enabled to put forth supernatural acts of grace, which we call a principle of grace, must be supposed to be implanted in us; which, were it acquired, we could not, properly speaking, be said to be born of God. From hence I am obliged to infer, that the regenerating act, or implanting this principle of grace, which is at least in order of nature antecedent to any act of grace put forth by us, is the immediate effect of the power of God, which none, who speak of regeneration as a Divine work, pretend to deny; and therefore I cannot but conclude, that it is wrought in us *without the instrumentality of the word,* or *any* of the ordinary means of grace. My reason for it is this: because it is necessary (from the nature of the thing) to our receiving, improving, or reaping any advantage by the word, that the Spirit should produce the principle of faith; and to say that this is done by the word, is, in effect, to assert that the word produces the principle, and the principle gives efficacy to the word; which seems to me little less than arguing in a circle. The word cannot profit unless it be mixed with faith; and faith cannot be put forth unless it proceeds from a principle

* Discourse, p. 249.

of grace implanted; therefore, this principle of grace is not produced *by* it. We may as well suppose that the presenting of a beautiful picture before a man that is blind can enable him to see, or the violent motion of a withered hand produce strength for action, as we can suppose that presenting the word, in an objective way, is the instrument whereby God produces that internal principle by which we are enabled to embrace it."*

There seem to be but two ways in which it can be supposed that the Spirit of God co-operates with His word; or, as Dr Whitby expresses it, "sets it home upon our hearts." The *influence* must be on either the *recipient* or the *instrument*, qualifying the former to receive, or giving energy to the latter to operate. If *one* of these be sufficient, to suppose *both* is unnecessary. As to the supposition of adding force to the instrument by some physical impulse, whether providential or supernatural, besides what has been already mentioned, it labours under the great disadvantage of being inexplicable in point of analogy; so that perhaps it is impossible to form any *clear ideas* of it by any operation in nature, without involving an absurdity in its moral application. Must we conceive of the word as a projectile, a missile weapon, or an instrument of power *producing* the moral principle? The idea is absurd; for then *moral* means must act *mechanically*, which involves a contradiction. Whereas if we suppose the physical influence to be on the recipient, predisposing the mind to a right improvement of means, the *certainty* of the intended effect is easily conceived, in perfect consistency with the *freedom* of the mind, and the *moral effect* of the means.

To this representation it may be objected, that the Scriptures often speak of the *powerful efficacy* of the word. "Is not my word as fire, and as a *hammer that breaketh* the rock in pieces?" "Of His own will begat He us *with the word of truth*." To which we reply in the words of the respectable author last referred to, that such language of Scripture "does not so much respect the *implanting* of the principle of grace, as it does our being enabled to *act* from that principle. *Regeneration* may be taken, not only for our being *made alive* to God, or *created* unto good works, but for our *putting forth living actions*, proceeding from that principle which is implanted in the soul."†

* See Ridgley's Body of Divinity, vol. ii., p. 21, &c.

† Ibid., p. 22.

In short, the *exercise* of every grace, as faith, fear, hope, love, supposes a *revealed object;* so that the very existence of these graces, considered as *our acts and duties,* believing, fearing, hoping, or loving, must be owing to the word of truth, as a generating cause. But, in treating of this branch of theological truth, it is of importance not to confound, as too often is done, these two sorts of causation; for seriously to maintain the sentiment here opposed would be of the same tendency as the following: that the *real cause* why the waters of the Red Sea were divided, was Moses' *hand* stretched over the sea, as God's instrument; or, that the *real cause* why Lazarus was quickened into life, was this sentence, "Lazarus, come forth."

It is presumed that, from the arguments advanced, and the objections obviated, it now appears evident, there is nothing in the orthodox doctrine of *special grace* at all inconsistent with *Divine equity.* We now proceed to another branch of the subject, viz.—

§ 26. FOURTHLY, *The will determined by grace.* What has been already advanced precludes, in some measure, the necessity of a full investigation of this point; and is rendered, moreover, less necessary to the inquisitive reader, by an incomparable treatise written on the subject, with a professed view to the book on which I am animadverting; I mean President Edwards's "Inquiry into the Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of Will which is supposed to be Essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame." The point of view in which we now consider the question is, Whether the determination of the will by grace is inconsistent with EQUITY? Dr Whitby contends, as do all the Arminians, that it is inconsistent; but before I proceed to confute his arguments, it is proper he should speak for himself.

Thus he states and reasons:—"For the due stating of this question concerning the liberty or freedom of the will of man, let it be noted, that the *state* of man in this world is a state of *trial* or probation; hence it follows, that the *liberty* belonging to this question is only that of a *lapsed* man in a state of trial, probation, and temptation: whether he hath a freedom to choose life or death, to answer or reject the calls and invitations of God to do, by the assistance of the grace afforded in the gospel to him, what is spiritually good as well as evil, or whether he be *determined to*

one, having only a freedom from coaction but not from necessity. This liberty is indeed no perfection of human nature; for it supposes us imperfect, as being subject to fall by temptation, and when we are advanced to the spirits of just men made perfect, or to a fixed state of happiness, will, with our other imperfections, be done away; but yet it is a freedom absolutely requisite, as we conceive, to render us capable of trial or probation, and to render our actions worthy of praise or dispraise, and our persons of rewards or punishments."

Again:—"The freedom of the will in this state of trial and temptation cannot consist with a determination to one, seeing this determinating operation puts him out of a state of trial, and makes him equal, when this Divine impulse comes upon him, to the state of angels; since he who must certainly and without fail do what the Divine impulse doth incite him to do, is as much determined to one as they are. And this is further evident from the general determination of the schools, and of all that I have read upon this subject, that the general will to be happy, and not to be miserable, though it be voluntary, is not free; because we cannot choose either not to be happy or to be miserable; and on the same account, say they, this will is not praiseworthy or rewardable."

Moreover:—"This *αὐτεξουσιον*, or *free-will* of man, being neither an *act*, for that is an exercise of the will, nor a *habit*, for that only doth facilitate and incline to action, but a *faculty of power;* and the object of that power being in moral actions something morally, in spiritual actions something spiritually good to be chosen, or spiritually evil to be avoided; that which *disables* any man from choosing what is spiritually good, or refusing what is thus evil, and therefore is destructive to his soul and spirit, must also take away his *liberty* to choose what is spiritually good, and to refuse what is spiritually evil."

Once more:—"To say here that men thus disabled may deserve punishment for the evil they do, though they cannot do otherwise, because they disobey *willingly* and choose to do so, is to make the devils and damned spirits further punishable, because they also choose to do evil; and the blessed angels rewardable, because they choose to do good, and do it willingly. To say that men under this unfrustrable operation are still *free*, because what they are moved thus to do they *will* to do, and do it with complacency, is

only to say, Man herein hath the freedom of an elect angel, which is not rewardable; but not that he hath the freedom of a proficient, or one in a state of trial and probation. That this is the true state of the question cannot be reasonably doubted."*

These extracts appear to me to contain the fundamental principles of our author's doctrine on the *freedom of the will*, in the application of which against the Calvinistic side of the question he everywhere insinuates that there is something inconsistent with Divine *justice* in the sentiments he opposes, and which we maintain. Let us now examine these principles with as much brevity as the nature of the subject will admit of.

§ 27. First, It is gratuitously assumed that the liberty belonging to *lapsed* man, is a liberty essentially *different* from that which belongs to man in a *perfect* state. Whereas the difference between *lapsed* and *perfect* can no more influence the question in dispute, "whether the will be determined by grace," than man's breach of the Divine law can absolve him from his allegiance to the Supreme Lawgiver and Judge. To suppose that the *fall* or transgression of man alters the nature of that liberty which makes him *accountable*, is contrary to all reason and analogy; and is not unlike a plea urged to excuse a man from discharging an *old* debt—because he has incurred a *new* one!

Secondly, Since man had not in his best estate, as before shewn,† "a power to do what is spiritually good," much less has he now in his lapsed state; except we suppose that his *power* increases with his guilt and *wickedness*. It is true, man has a *borrowed* power, which never fails him, of choosing what *appears* to him *best;* else he must either cease to be a voluntary agent, or choose evil *as evil*, which is inadmissible. There is therefore no controversy about his power of choosing life or death, as far as *he judges* (all things being taken into the account) the one or the other to be eligible. But this must not be confounded with "a power to do what is spiritually good," as if the latter were necessary to accountableness. For—

Thirdly, The *real* power of doing well is not, and cannot be essential to the *liberty* of *any* accountable being. If, when the intellect represents an object as best to be chosen, a Divine *concurrence* take place, as an established law of providential government, which may be called a *borrowed* or *improper* power in the

* Discourse, pp. 297, 299, 301, 305, 309, 312. † See above, pp. 265–289.

creature, it is abundantly sufficient to constitute the responsibility of the subject.

Fourthly, The *salvo* subjoined in the objection, "a freedom to do, *by the assistance of the grace afforded in the gospel*," is vague and indeterminate, but probably is intended to convey the sentiment before exposed, "an idea raised in the brain by the Holy Spirit, and the impression made upon it there;" which requires no other confutation than is due to the ancient jargon of Aristotelian philosophy—mystic forms and occult qualities.

Fifthly, When our author contends that the will ought not to be *determined to one*, in order to blameworthiness or praise, in such a manner as to be free from *necessity* as well as coaction; he requires not only what is unreasonable but *impossible*. For there is no medium between the will being *determined to one*, when the choice is really good, and the *will determining itself;* and that this latter is impossible, or an inconceivable absurdity, President Edwards has given the most ample proofs, in his unanswerable performance on the subject, to which the reader is referred.

§ 28. Dr Whitby contends, that the liberty of man, in the present state of trial, implies "a power to do what is spiritually good as well as evil." Could any one, then, except he had a bad cause to serve, a tottering hypothesis to prop, once imagine it conceivable, that *such* a power is one of the *imperfections* of human nature, and peculiar to the present state? Yet such is the opinion which he holds. An *imperfection*, yet *absolutely requisite* to render our actions worthy of praise or dispraise! May not this writer be justly termed the patron of IMPERFECTIONS? Surely, what renders our actions *praiseworthy*, and our persons capable of *rewards*, must be *good;* but are *imperfections* good things?

Again, that *freedom*, in the present state, cannot consist with a *determination to one*, he argues from the similarity that would then subsist between men in this world and the angels in heaven. But men's obligations do not arise from what they *are* in a state of probation; the question is what they *ought* to be. And *ought* not the will of God to be "done on earth, as it is done in heaven?" The truth is, that men, as far as they are praiseworthy, are like the angels; and their *goodness* proceeds from the same cause: they do "what the Divine impulse doth incite them to do." The difference does not consist in the *nature* of their freedom, where they choose what is spiritually good; but in its degree, or, perhaps

more accurately, in that the angels are *always* incited to do what is right, to the utter exclusion of all evil; and men in the present state *variously*. As far as they are the subjects of sovereign *grace*, they are so incited as to time and degrees; but as far as they are dealt with in *equity*, they choose what is wrong, for nothing prevents their abuse of liberty but a gracious Divine impulse.

It is objected, that "the general will to be happy, and not to be miserable, though it be voluntary, is not free," and therefore not praiseworthy; from whence it is inferred, that no freedom is praiseworthy but what is independent of all necessity. Consequently, such is the desperate state of the cause, he denies that angels are at all rewardable, and the damned spirits further punishable! As if the *whereness* of a moral action constituted its *nature!* But is there no *goodness* in the steady inclination of angels to holiness and God, or *badness* in the fixed aversion of devils? nothing praiseworthy in the ardent love of the one, or blameworthy in the constant hatred of the other? These, however, are implied parts of the system opposed, and which are adopted for the sake of avoiding the consequence that an action may be at once *free, necessary,* and *praiseworthy.* But the union of these being evidently in the blessed God, in holy angels, and Jesus Christ, another figment must be invented of a freedom *peculiar to a lapsed state!* It must be earnestly contended for, as *absolutely requisite,* else God would be *unjust* in requiring compliance with His calls and invitations to duty; and yet must be done away as an *imperfection!*

Once more: it is argued, that since the requisite freedom is neither an *act* nor a *habit,* but "*a faculty of power,*" a Divine determinating operation takes away *liberty* to choose, which is inadmissible. But, leaving our author in the full enjoyment of his own definition, it is granted by him that a "habit doth *facilitate* and *incline* to action;" if, therefore, Divine grace form the temper and habit of the mind, which inclines to a good action, an event or action may be made *certain,* or *necessarily* future, without infringing this "faculty of power." And this is what we plead for, not that grace has for its immediate object the act or power of willing, so much as the *person* in his disposition and habits. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good; but an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

§ 29. It remains only to shew, in a more direct manner, that

this *operation of grace which determines the will* is not inconsistent with *equity;* which is the only objection, virtually, that Arminians can make in their opposition to it. In addition, therefore, to what has been said in reply to particular arguments and objections, we observe :—

(1.) That from the *nature of the will itself,* which is the power of the mind by which we choose, and its *true liberty,* it appears the influence of grace in determining the will is not unjust, or unworthy of the Supreme Governor. If the will be the power we have of choosing the greatest apparent good, as all must allow it is ; and if that *apparent* good which is chosen be the *real* good, while the coincidence of *appearance* and *reality* arises from the graciously *rectified* state of the mind ; is there any infringement of the will in its operation when making such a choice, more than if the mind were left to choose the *appearance* only of good, to the rejection of the reality, through its unrectified temper? Can the *purity* of our liberty and choice be more effectually secured by the *impurity* of the mind and heart? Can the will and its liberty be *more perfect* by the presence of an acknowledged *imperfection?* Is the liberty less *real* because the object preferred is good, and certainly foreseen by omniscience?

(2.) The futility of the system opposed, and the equitableness of that now defended, may appear from the *nature of that operation* which is in question, in reference to the will ; it being a sovereign act of God rectifying the *moral state* of the creature, which is a consideration altogether different from an injury offered to the will, which is a *natural* faculty.

(3.) We appeal to the *nature of equity,* which is violated only when the creature has more than his due of *suffering.* But as this operation consists in nothing worse than rectifying the moral state of the subject, what conceivable *injury* is done it? Our system does indeed represent the subject as destitute of all *merit* and independent worthiness ; because none is *really due* to him, whether viewed as a sinner or a mere creature. Why our author should *ascribe praise to men* for choosing what is good, and yet *deny praise to angels* for making the *same* choice, it may well puzzle those heavenly intelligences to understand ; except it be to favour the monstrous, extravagant, rebellious doctrine of *human* merit, and to rob God of part at least of that praise which is due to His glorious majesty.

(4.) We appeal to the *nature of Divine sovereignty*, which has *unlimited* power over the creature for its *welfare*, in its being, disposition, and actions. Yet no one who understands the subject can hesitate respecting the perfectly harmonious agreement of *such* Divine sovereignty and equity. To *confirm* saints or angels in purity and happiness, and make them *necessarily* inclined and determined to good, is an act of *sovereignty;* since, I presume, arrogance itself would fail in defending it as their *due* in equity; therefore, to determine and confirm a moral agent in the choice of good is not inconsistent with equity.

(5.) We appeal to the just *consequences* which would flow from the denial of our proposition. It would tend to restrain omnipotent benevolence from rendering men, while in the present state, *better* than they are without their *previous* consent: God must not presume to make the work of His hands more amiable, more inclined to virtue, to holiness, and the fruition of Himself; He must wait for the favourable decision of His enemy—"the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, which is not subject to His law, nor indeed can be." A work must be wrought, a change must be effected, or man cannot be happy, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord;" but man cannot be conformed to the law of God while in his carnal enmity, that is, cannot be holy, or qualified for heaven; if therefore God be restrained from effecting this qualification, how is it to be done? The truth is, if God do it not, it *cannot be done*, nor can any soul of our fallen race entertain the smallest degree of rational hope of eternal happiness. As we would avoid eternal misery, we must be "holy and without blame, pure in heart, and made meet to be partakers of the future inheritance of the saints in light;" none but God *can* thus qualify us, and He has promised to do it in various ways; but this proud *αὐτεξουσιον*, this formless phantom of *self-sovereignty*, holds His hand and charges Him with *injustice* if He do it!

In brief, the sentiment I oppose robs God of what He claims as His right and glory—to save us by His *grace*, not by *works*, lest any man should *boast*. It places man on the ground of *self-worthiness*, which is the sole prerogative of God. It ascribes to imperfect rebellious man that sovereignty over future events, and his own happiness in particular, which is denied to holy angels, and which belongs only to God, who "works in us both to will and to do" what is praiseworthy "of His own good pleasure." And,

finally, it implies that God cannot be just except man possess a power to *be* good, and to *do* good *of himself*—a power which we have endeavoured to shew to be incommunicable to any creature however exalted.

With absolute *election*, particular *redemption*, *special grace*, and the *will* determined by grace, stands closely connected—

§ 30. FIFTHLY, *The perseverance of saints;* which Dr Whitby strenuously opposes. We shall take the state of the question, on his part, from the author himself. "We own," says he, "that they who are preserved to salvation, are so preserved by the power of God through faith; and that they who are thus kept, are kept by Christ, He alone being able to keep them unblamable: but then we deny that God hath absolutely promised to keep them by His power from making shipwreck of this faith; or that the just man who lives by faith shall never draw back unto perdition."* "We own that God hath engaged His faithfulness that all who do not wickedly depart from Him shall never be forced from Him by the power of any adversaries; but deny that God hath from eternity decreed, or absolutely promised to preserve them from falling into those sins which He cautions them to avoid, or to perform Himself what He requires as their duty."† "We grant that God hath promised perseverance in the ways of righteousness to the end, to those who constantly and conscientiously use the means by Him prescribed for that end; but deny that God hath absolutely promised to interpose His power infrustrably to engage all true believers to use these means."‡

On the other hand, we acknowledge, not only that saints may be guilty of great sins, but also that it is not owing to any strength, steadiness, or immutability of the renewed will or nature in them, that they do not fall away totally and finally; but is to be ascribed, not only to the power, but also the *purpose*, *faithfulness*, and *wisdom* of God.

What we hold therefore, in distinction from our opponents, is reducible to these two points:—*First*, That those who are *saints* indeed, pardoned and renewed, shall *persevere* in that state, and be finally glorified; and, consequently, that those who do not *die* saints *never were* saints. *Secondly*, That in this doctrine there is nothing *inequitable;* there are no objections implied in it that can justly militate against the accountableness of man or the equity of

* Discourse, p. 385, &c. † Ibid., p. 386. ‡ Ibid., pp. 387, 388.

God, the declarations of His word, or the rules of His providence.

§ 31. To investigate the truth and evidence of this doctrine in the numerous *passages of Holy Writ* which are usually introduced into this controversy, would lead us to a prolixity unsuitable to the nature of our plan. We conceive that not a *single text* fairly interpreted, according to its real design, is repugnant to this doctrine; but as our author has been at the trouble of reducing them into certain general heads, those which are most plausible and important in the view of the inquisitive mind will be noticed in the way of objections.

In order to simplify the subject as much as possible, the first thing proposed may be thus expressed: The doctrine which maintains that the persons who *are eventually saved might have been eventually lost,* is unworthy of God, according to the discoveries He has made on the subject, both of Himself and His conduct; and that the converse of this proposition is equally so, namely, That some of those who are *eventually lost* were once *saints.* The arguments which conclude in the one case are conclusive in the other, and therefore we may consider them as connected. Yet that the attention of the reader may not be embarrassed by the complexity of the subject, let this point first be kept principally in view: It is *unworthy of God* to suppose that *any who are eventually saved might have been eventually lost.* And in proof of the assertion we appeal—

First, To what we are taught of the Divine *purpose.* It is acknowledged by Dr Whitby himself, "that they who are kept are kept by the power of God;" it must be also acknowledged, that for any to be so kept is a great privilege and *blessing,* especially to be preserved in safety until they are lodged in eternal blessedness. This, then, is a real good, of which God is confessedly the author and finisher. Now, it is *unworthy* of God to suppose that He did not *purpose* all the good He performs; therefore He purposed the salvation and perseverance of all who are eventually saved. Consequently, those who are saved could not have been lost; for *who hath resisted His will* of purpose? Surely, it will not be questioned by any who have the smallest degree of real knowledge of the true character of God, that known unto Him are all *His works* from the beginning of the world, and that all *He effects* is according to the *counsel* of His own will. These two

things, therefore, which are so evidently joined, God's *work* in time and His eternal *purpose*, must be separated, which is altogether unworthy of the Divine character, or else we must conclude, that those who are or shall be actually saved could not have been lost.

When, therefore, it can be proved that eventual salvation originated in *ourselves*, and originated in such a manner as to make us *independent* on the work of God in our preservation; or when it can be proved that God worketh some things, even the bringing of many sons to glory by the Captain of their salvation, which He did not *purpose* to do after the counsel of His will; then it may be also proved, but not before, that some who are eventually saved *might* have been lost. Again we appeal—

Secondly, To the Divine *faithfulness*. To suppose that any who are eventually saved might have been lost, is an impeachment of the faithfulness of God to His own *purpose and plan* respecting the event. That God has a purpose and plan respecting such event is manifest, except we say that the important event will take place either *without* or *contrary to* any purpose or plan; which is to build the glory, everlasting glory of millions on the phantom *contingence*, or the equally fantastic notion of *sinful self-sovereignty!* But if there is a purposed plan respecting the event, God's *faithfulness* to His own designs, and its inviolable preservation, require that those who are finally saved *could not* have been lost.

We draw the same conclusion from the argument of God's faithfulness to the *Saviour*. "Ask of me," saith God to the Messiah, "and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."* "And I know," says the Messiah, "that thou hearest me always."† Whatever, therefore, Christ asks of the Father, He is engaged in faithfulness to grant. And this is what He asks with peculiar emphasis:—"Holy Father, *keep* through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. I pray that thou shouldest *keep* them from the evil. *Sanctify* them through thy truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be *with* me where I am; that they may behold my glory."‡ Here the Father *engages* to

* Psalm ii. 8. † John xi. 42. ‡ John xvii. passim.

give the Son what He asks, and indeed the mediatorial office implies such an engagement; for what kind of Mediator would He be whose petitions would be rejected, and how unworthy of God such an appointment! Here also we observe the Mediator emphatically asking that *all* who should believe on Him might be *kept* and *glorified.* If therefore it can be said of any person that he is at any time a *believer* or a *saint*, the Divine faithfulness to Christ, as Mediator and interceding Priest, requires that he should behold in heaven the glory of Christ, and be eternally with Him. And of such we must say, from the premises, that he *could not* have been lost but in violation of the Divine faithfulness. We appeal, finally—

§ 32. Thirdly, To the Divine *wisdom.* This consideration will be principally directed in favour of the other part of the argument —that those who do *not die* saints *never were* saints. For it might be urged, that, admitting the Divine purpose and faithfulness to bring to glory those who are eventually saved, *others* who are not so saved might be the subjects of grace for a time; such grace as would have *saved* them, had they not drawn back unto perdition. In reply, we grant, that this hypothesis, as not militating against the certain salvation of those who are eventually saved, or the purpose and faithfulness of God respecting them, is not *so degrading* to the Divine character as the other; but yet we regard it as unworthy of God in many respects, and think it is virtually answered in our last argument drawn from the Mediator's prayer for *all believers;* and particularly we consider it as unworthy of the Divine *wisdom* on several accounts:—

(1.) Since every believer is, from an enemy, reconciled to God, not only by the death of His Son, but also by the gift of His Spirit,—regenerated, justified, adopted, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,—the object of a peculiar love and compassion, the subject of a peculiar power; since he is forgiven, all past sins blotted out, united to the Saviour, and made the temple of the Holy Ghost, represented in heaven by his High Priest, and interested in His intercession,—it must be allowed that here is a *very distinguishing favour* shewn him. He who at first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,—hath raised him from the grave of a natural state, and brought him out of dark-

ness into His marvellous light. He hath quickened him together with Christ, as the effect of the great love wherewith he was loved when dead in sin; he, with *all saints*, beholds in a glass the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. These are some of the blessings actually conferred on *every saint*, which, it must be acknowledged, are miracles of mercy quite above the course of nature and common providence. Now, we argue that it appears repugnant to all the views we have of wisdom, that any should be, in these wonderful particulars, the subjects of *sovereign grace*, and, after all, be left to perish.

(2.) We argue from the grand essential distinction which ever must be maintained between *moral means* and a *sovereign operation*. Were all that the Scriptures relate as done for saints nothing more than the *former*, the case would be very different; and the conclusion of Arminians, and our modern Rationalists in general who agree with them in this point, would be admissible. We admit that God does great things for those who are finally lost in the way of *moral means;* He *proclaims* to them His adorable perfections, and *exhibits* to them His covenant mercy, His incarnate Son, whose mediatorial sufficiency is a source of universal encouragement, and in Him life eternal. And this is peculiarly the case with those who are the subjects of covenant seals and their attendant privileges, who yet may fall short of eventual salvation. But were we to admit that *means* are all, to the exclusion of sovereign *operation*, no flesh could be saved.

The *necessity* of this operation has been before shewn; let it suffice to add, that the favours now referred to, and with which every believer is endowed, are not anything short of *sovereign operations*, as contradistinguished from the *means* properly so called. And from hence we argue, that it appears incongruous to the character of wisdom to separate these from final salvation. Means appear to be the *only* instruments of moral government, as they are fully adequate to that end; gracious operations, therefore, are not *necessary* for any degree of condemnation which might display the honours of justice, seeing the formal ground of all punishment, as of all sin and accountableness, is not *sovereign operation*, but *suitable means* abused. Now, if neither final salvation, nor yet the display of justice in their condemnation, be an end attained by these miracles of mercy, must not the supposition

of a *saint's* being *eternally lost* be a bold impeachment of the *Divine wisdom?*

§ 33. From these considerations, we may, I think, fairly conclude that God *hateth putting away* His saints, will *perfect* that which concerns them, will *never leave* nor forsake them, nor the work of His own sovereign grace in them; that He who hath *begun* this good work will *carry it on* to perfection; guiding them by His counsel, He will receive them to glory, and, girding them with strength, will make both their way and their end perfect; that the sheep, who know His voice, and share His pardoning and purifying favour, shall never perish, and, having drank of the living water, shall never thirst. If they fall, they shall arise; and should the violent blast of temptation injure the fruit, leaves, and branches, the final evil shall not happen to the just, nor shall his *root* be moved.* Though in *themselves* there is every cause of fear, and ground for caution, yet in *God* there is abundant cause of safety, and salvation infallibly secured. "I will put my fear in their hearts," saith God, "that they shall not depart from me:"† the tendency of their evil hearts is to go astray, but my fear shall prevent their apostasy. Having loved His own, He loves them to the end. Christ hath united them to Himself by His Spirit, irrespectively of any worth in them; shall He, therefore, discontinue that union and influence because they do not render themselves worthy in a subsequent period? If the enmity of their hearts and the impurity of their lives were no sufficient cause why He should *withhold* His love, shall their after imperfections determine Him to *withdraw* His love?

§ 34. But a laboured vindication of perseverance, from a consideration of the numerous topics of argument with which the cause might be defended, is not the point now designed, so much as its defence against one radical objection urged by its opposers —viz., that such would make the *government of God inequitable.* This is the *tendency* of Dr Whitby's reasoning and remarks. He particularly urges:—"It is *absurd* to pray or intercede for that [*perseverance*] which God hath absolutely decreed; nor can it *reasonably* be supposed that an all-wise God should go about to justify the equity of His ways *only by supposing things impossible* by virtue of His own decree and promise. . . . . To believe the doctrine of perseverance, is to make God *seriously to threaten* men for such

* Prov. xii. 3, 21. † Jer. xxxii. 40.

a sin [*apostasy*] of which they are *not capable*, and of which they are *obliged to believe* they are not capable. . . . . It seems *incongruous* to imagine that God should make an *absolute promise* that true believers should persevere to the end, and be unfrustrably saved, and yet *suspend* their happiness and reward on this condition, that they do persevere unto the end."*

Many other passages to the same purpose occur in our author's "Discourse;" but as they all terminate in one root,—that it is *incongruous and unworthy of God, as a just Governor, to insure, unfrustrably, the perseverance of saints*,—and as our animadversions on his work have considerably swelled this Essay, it would be superfluous and unpleasant to multiply quotations. This, I believe, is all that polemic fairness requires. We proceed, therefore, to examine this radical principle in the following remarks:—

(1.) If there be a moral system, there must be *commands*, virtual at least, and consequent obligations. And as we are *dependent* upon God for all we *are*, *have*, and *do*, it must be reasonable to pray for Divine aids, and to use all moral means of perfection. This, I presume, will be readily admitted by all whose understandings are accessible by arguments, and whose hearts are not the receptacles for the dregs of infidelity.

(2.) A moral system supposes also that the subject of it, while in a state of probation, is exposed to *danger*,—the danger of sinning, and consequently of suffering; the latter being the natural effect of the former. Hence it follows—

(3.) That no man, while in this probationary state, should consider himself so secure as to be above all danger; but should watch against high-mindedness, cultivate holy fear, and in this temper pass the time of his sojourning on earth, perfecting holiness, and working out, by Divine assistance, his own salvation by opposing all sin. From hence must appear the reasonableness, congruity, and beauty of such inspired addresses as have a tendency to promote this frame of mind, and with which the sacred records abound. Moreover—

(4.) There are, it must be allowed, and our author does not deny, certain absolute promises, *on the part of God*, that He will give grace and glory, never leave nor forsake us, and keep us by His mighty power through faith unto salvation. Thus far we agree, and here is the place where we are obliged to part. But—

* Discourse, pp. 388, 393, 398, 419.

(5.) If the perseverance of any be *final*, and they *eventually* saved, what impropriety is there in saying that they are *preserved thus by their God unfrustrably?* Whatever of happiness, of goodness, of real entity, comes to pass, is either by *chance*, blind, unmeaning chance, or by a *settled plan*. To avow the former, is unworthy of the Christian name, nay, abhorrent from unsophisticated reason; to admit the latter, is the same as to acknowledge that the saints *persevere* in consequence and in virtue of a *settled plan*, and therefore *unfrustrably*, which is what we contend for. However—

§ 35. Let us view the subject a little more closely. If there were any real *incongruity* between the absolute *certainty* of an event, and that event being represented as depending on a *condition*, which is the main objection urged, the whole system of Providence respecting man would be implicated in the charge. It is the duty of men, for instance, to *pray* for their daily bread, fruitful seasons, the peace of the world, the spread of the gospel, and a thousand other things; but who will venture to assert that these events are not included in the plan of Providence to a *certainty?*

If it be said, This plan *might* have been *otherwise* if the conditions had been differently performed, it will avail nothing to the objector; for to make the *event* different from what it is, only implies, either that the *plan* of Providence would have been another, diverse from what it really is, or that it proceeds *without any* plan. Not the latter, surely; and if the former, what is gained by it? Nothing in favour of Arminianism.

If there be no incongruity, nothing unworthy of the just Governor of the universe, in commanding us to pray and act in a conditional manner as to *providential* concerns, which are the result of a fixed plan; no good reason can be shewn why it should be incongruous to extend the command to *gracious* concerns, and the affairs of our salvation, though the result of a plan equally fixed and unfrustrable. If I pray for the conversion of a sinner, or the final salvation of a saint, *why* should this involve the consequence that there is no certainty or fixed plan respecting the event? In order to constitute my prayers, endeavours, and the use of all prescribed means *rational*, must God act *without* a plan, or without settling the *result?*

The fact is, man, as the subject of moral government, *must* be

addressed and dealt with *conditionally*. His rational powers, his deliberative freedom, his being subject to law and sanctions, and amenable to his Judge, require it. A being that obeys or disobeys by *natural* necessity is, in that respect, no *moral* agent; being *impelled* without deliberative *choice*. To propose a *condition* to such would be indeed incongruous, for there is no room to deliberate on the claims of the object presented. But the *hypothetical* necessity, or *certainty* of the event, which we hold, admits no less of deliberation and conditional proposals than the opposed hypothesis, which rejects the Divine purposes of election and unfrustrable perseverance.

In reality, our *knowledge* of the *event* is not the *rule* of our obligation. Our author supposes, that if the event, that is to say perseverance, were *known* or *believed* to be unfrustrable, this would have a real tendency to relax the person's efforts. But on what principle of religion or morals are we authorised to form this conclusion? The mistake is, indeed, but too common; some have even avowed, that if they *knew* any individual to be a *non-elect*, they would neither pray for him, nor use any means for his conversion. Such must overlook the very essential eternal difference there is between God's *decretive* plan and His *rectoral* will.

Our author's hypothesis must, of course, refer the important event, perseverance, to the will of man as the *proper cause*, the prime discriminating efficient; and, consequently, there is no evidence in the nature of things, if our reasoning (§§ 26–29) on the will being determined by grace be valid, that one saint will ever persevere, or that God can have, without first obtaining leave of man's free-will, or self-determining power, even one saint to inherit glory. If any persevere, it must not be, it should seem, by *unfrustrable grace*, but by the exclusive efficacy of frustrable human will.

There are some terms in this part of the objection which are not properly applied: particularly where a saint is represented, on our principles, as *not capable of apostasy*, and obliged to *believe* he is not. Whereas we maintain that the most eminent saint is both *capable* and even *certain* of falling, if not prevented by sovereign grace; and therefore is obliged to *believe* so. If he is not capable of apostasy, if that evil one toucheth him not, it is because the everlasting arms are underneath, and his seed remaineth in him through sovereign interposition. The question is

not whether he is under the same *laws* with others, liable to the same *dangers*, or in *himself* capable of falling; but whether the acknowledged event, actual perseverance unto salvation, does not imply such a Divine arrangement, or fixed purpose, as renders the union between grace and glory unfrustrably certain. We maintain, indeed, that he who loves God *truly* shall *continue* to do so *eternally;* and yet, *if* a true lover of God were permitted to fall so far as to cease to love Him truly, it is manifest he can draw no inference of encouragement while in that state.

Besides, we are agreed as to the *consequence* of apostasy—that those who are the subjects of it cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But the difference consists in the supposed antecedent state of those who apostatise totally and finally from the profession of the truth. While Arminians hold that grace is *extinguished* in them, we maintain they never had received the truth in the love of it; in other words, that the nature of genuine holiness never existed in them, for reasons before adduced, (§ 30, &c.) Therefore the persuasion we have of our safety can operate no further against holy fear and watchfulness, and the practice of piety, than the contrary persuasion. For observable remissness in the Christian's life would argue against the *reality* of grace, on our system, as well as against *actual possession,* on the other. And the remedy in both cases must be the same—penitential humiliation on account of defects, and application to the throne of grace for needful supplies.

§ 36. Thus we have attempted a fair and full investigation of the question, Whether the Calvinistic explanation of the points in dispute be inconsistent with Divine equity? and to prove that neither absolute *election,* particular *redemption,* our doctrine of distinguishing and *efficacious grace,* the *will* determined by grace, nor the *perseverance* of saints, imply the least reflection on this adorable attribute. How far the reasoning in the preceding pages is conclusive, let the impartial and competent reader determine. If the validity of it be admitted, it must also be acknowledged that the cause of Arminianism is proportionably weakened.

SECTION III.

WHETHER SOVEREIGNTY, IN THE CALVINISTIC SENSE OF THE TERM BE A DIVINE ATTRIBUTE.

§ 1. Introduction. The subject stated, and its importance. § 2. That there is in Deity an attribute answerable to our definition of sovereignty, argued from, First, The self-existence and independence of God. § 3. Secondly, His all-sufficiency and absolute liberty. § 4. Thirdly, From the essential imperfection of all creatures; and especially, § 5. The precariousness of the creatures' liberty. § 6. Fourthly, The wisdom of God. § 7. Fifthly, The chief end of all creation. § 8–12. Corollaries.

§ 1. THE definition of the *word* "sovereignty," ascertaining the sense in which I understand it, and which the Calvinistic system requires, has been given before, when the principal terms which occur in this work were professedly explained.* What we now propose is to *prove*, That God is actually possessed of an *absolute right to will and to do whatever is not inconsistent with His own essence, intellect, and fixed purpose.*

Sovereignty cannot extend so far as to counteract a Divine immanent *purpose actually formed;* for this would imply that He had purposed imperfectly, without wisdom, capriciously, or without a plan. Let it be observed, however, that by *purpose* we intend something superior to the present *settled laws of nature*, which, *possibly*, may be suspended, controlled, counteracted, or even annihilated, without necessarily impeaching the Divine sovereignty. For it must be allowed that all this was, antecedently considered, an object of sovereignty; and may, for anything that can be advanced, *à priori*, be a part of the *actual* purpose.

Though our opponents permit themselves to speak sometimes very slightingly, I may say with great rashness, of *decrees* and *purposes*, in the commonly-received Calvinistic sense of the terms,

* See above, p. 60.

yet I do not recollect that any author seriously objects to a *right* in God to form, or even to the actual existence of, *some* decrees. Nor is it probable that any one will object to the *irreversibility* of those which are admitted to exist. We are therefore agreed, that what is thus irreversibly proposed, be it what it may, is incapable of encroachment by any Divine *right,* however *absolute* in other respects.

Again ; it cannot be supposed that either side will question this proposition, That nothing can be the object of Divine *right* but what is represented to the Divine *intellect* as *possible.* That, for instance, the Divine intellect should represent a self-existent or independent creature, is impossible ; for it would imply two supremes, created and uncreated, which is a direct encroachment on the Divine essence, and therefore infinitely absurd.

Moreover ; it is allowed, that nothing inconsistent with the Divine *essence* can be a matter of Divine *right,* as that would involve the grossest contradiction. And, for the same reason, whatever is inconsistent with any *essential attribute* of Deity, cannot be an object of Divine right. For what belongs to the Divine *essence* must belong to *essential* perfections, whether natural or moral.

Once more ; it must be acknowledged that whatever is inconsistent with *any essential perfection* of Deity is *inequitable,* since by the term "*equity,*" we understand "a giving unto all their *due ;*" consequently, a right to what is inconsistent with equity is a right to encroach on the *rights* of God ! a right to violate infinite *rectitude !* a right to withhold from God His *essential due !* absurdities which require no comment.—These things duly considered, our proposition first mentioned, and which was proposed for demonstration, may be rendered a little shorter, and less complicated, thus : *God has an absolute right to will and to do whatever is not inconsistent with equity ;* and as there is no ground of dispute between the advocates of the opposite systems respecting any object of sovereignty, except what relates to accountable moral agents, in order, therefore, to simplify the proposition still more, we may add, *that equity which gives to all accountable moral agents their* DUE.

The importance of this principle in theology, and especially in the examination of Arminianism, must be evident to all who have attended to the subject. If God were not *essentially sovereign,* in the sense now explained, it would be a difficulty insuperable to

defend the cause for which we plead; and, to speak my mind freely, there would be, in my view, no system of morality or of religion worth contending for. On the contrary, the avowal of God's *absolute right*, as now stated, must needs affect the latitudinarian cause very essentially.

This being the case, let me solicit the reader's closest and most candid attention. But before we proceed to establish our position, it may be proper still more explicitly to caution him against the supposition that Arminians reject *every notion* of Divine sovereignty; what we therefore intend is, that there is in Deity an essential attribute answerable to the definition, and which Dr Whitby, in all his *Discourses* on the contested points, virtually denies.

§ 2. That sovereignty is, in our sense of the word, a perfection essential to Deity, appears from this one general remark: That *dominion*, or *rightful power*, is a real *excellence*, according to the degree in which it prevails in every rational being, and therefore belongs to God in an infinite degree, seeing He is confessedly the source of all excellence; nor does there appear any possible ground of objection against its being extended, in its operations, to the most absolute degree. Let us, however, be a little more particular:—

First, The *self-existence* and *independence* of God necessarily imply that He is above control, with respect to His creatures, as to *moral* as well as *natural* power; possessed not only of *unfrustrable physical strength*, but also of *authoritative right*. For who in earth or heaven has a right to say, in the language of control, "What doest thou?" Here observe—

(1.) His self-existence is not *affected* by giving *existence* to creatures, the production of His own will. It cannot be supposed that He resigned to others anything that was previously and essentially His. Consequently, as self-existence implies an *absolute right* in God to will and to do whatever is not inconsistent with *equity* as it respects *Himself*, so God continues, notwithstanding the existence of creatures, to possess that absolute right as it respects *them;* that is, while they have their *due*.

(2.) Self-existence is not *affected* by the non-existence, or *annihilation*, of creatures. It cannot be conceived that the dependent existence of creatures implies, from the mere fact of their existing, a *claim* upon God for the *continuance* of it. He, therefore,

has an absolute right, in equity, to recall when He pleases the being He has given.

(3.) Self-existence implies an absolute right to prescribe the *mode* and *condition* of dependent existence, while not inconsistent with equity. Hence the amazing *variety* of creatures! Hence the *degrees* in the scale of being and of excellence! Nor can there be any ground of remonstrance for any one, in all this astonishing assemblage of beings, however dishonourable or mean it may be in comparison of others, why its *mode* or *condition* of existence should be different from what it is. And while these creatures, in whatever part of the universe they exist, have any modification whatsoever, including the greatest degrees of pleasure and pain, in equity, this absolute right is not *affected* thereby, any more than self-existence.

§ 3. Secondly, The *all-sufficiency* of God, and His absolute *liberty*, or freedom to choose out of all possibles, imply the possession of that absolute right for which we contend. Our opponents will find no reluctance in allowing that God ever possessed an all-sufficiency adequate to an endless variety of plans; and that He was at absolute liberty to adopt which He pleased in equity. But they seem not to be aware that the very principle for which they contend, the high prerogative of FREE-WILL, destroys their system; that is, that the FREE-WILL, the *absolute liberty* which is essential to God, requires, and necessarily implies, the *absolute control* of *man's* liberty. While they contend in favour of human *free-will* to the exclusion of *Divine decrees* respecting that will, they must necessarily raise the former above the latter, and so make the liberty of God inferior to that of man. For there cannot be *two supreme* liberties, any more than two self-sufficiencies; the one must needs be subordinate to, and controlled by the other. If the freedom of God be not supreme and absolute, then is He not all-sufficient; if it be, then is man's liberty limited, restrained, and directed thereby. And if our liberty be subject to control, then the whole of our condition, modifications, and future state. Therefore the all-sufficiency of God, as an adequate object of infinite liberty, and liberty itself which is *power*, and therefore in God to an infinite degree, imply an absolute right in God to will and act whatever is not inconsistent with equity; and, consequently, to influence and control the most uncontrollable thing in man, his freedom. *God's* or *man's* liberty *must* reign supreme.

§ 4. Thirdly, We next appeal, in proof of Divine sovereignty, to the *essential imperfection of all creatures.* As there can be, it is self-evident, but one absolutely perfect Being, the self-existent and all-sufficient Jehovah, it is equally evident that all others are essentially imperfect. But this essential imperfection implies that essential perfection should have an absolute right to dispose of it in any possible way not inconsistent with equity; even in all those respects wherein its imperfection consists. As, therefore, every creature, compared with God, is imperfect as to being, properties, volitions, actions, &c., it must be essential to God to possess and exert the sovereignty of which we speak.

§ 5. Among the imperfections essential to creatures, we must reckon the *precariousness* of their *liberty;* their defectibility, and uncertainty of preservation entering into the very essence of their freedom. Nothing is more characteristic of the awful difference between the Creator and His accountable creatures than that of indefectibility, absolute certainty, and infallibility, in Him, and in them the reverse. But this precariousness must imply a sovereign reserve, a controlling power, an absolute right to influence, direct, preserve; to overrule and rectify the mistakes of defectible freedom. If not, God would bestow a power over which He had no right, and the abuses of which He could not rectify. In short, to deny to God such a sovereignty as we speak of, is the same as to allow Him skill to make a curious machine, the very nature of which implies a liability to get out of repair, but the defects of which are irremediable. It is to allow Him skill to make man upright, but not to visit him with grace and mercy from foresight and purpose. This being the creature's imperfection, and the Creator's right, there is no assignable reason why it should not extend to everything not inconsistent with equity, according to our definition of it.

§ 6. Fourthly, Our definition of sovereignty is implied in the notion essential to *Divine wisdom.* Wisdom implies foresight and provision; but excludes all chance, and settles everything that is a proper object of it. This clearly supposes an absolute right to exclude all contingence, and to will and do whatever is not inequitable. Surely wisdom belongeth unto God, and known unto Him are all His works of nature and grace, in every degree and to the latest period. To effect *all good,* and to prevent *much* evil, are sovereign acts, not one of which is unjust; but we dare not,

we cannot say, without violating *justice*, that *moral evil* is an object of sovereign *causation*, or indeed of sovereignty, properly speaking, in any sense. Holy *equity* gives *occasion* to moral evil to shew itself; but sovereign *wisdom* prevents the universal spread, and its horrible effects, to the degree it sees proper.

§ 7. Fifthly, The *chief end* of all *created existence* implies that sovereignty, in our sense of it, is essential to God. That God "made all things for Himself," that is, to represent His own excellence, is not only the language of Scripture, but also the verdict of impartial reason.* But if so, who sees not that this implies Divine sovereignty? For is it conceivable that God should form all things in order, chiefly to display His own adorable excellence, and yet not possess a sovereignty over them? After all the evidence which has been produced, and the reference made to President Edwards's masterly performance on the subject of this last argument, I hope it will be needless to enlarge, and trust it may be said without arrogance, that the original proposition is fairly demonstrated—viz., "That God has an absolute right to will and to do whatever is not inconsistent with equity; that equity which gives to all accountable moral agents their DUE." Nor am I aware of any objections that may be urged with any plausibility against these arguments. It remains, therefore, to notice the CONSEQUENCES which flow from the proof given.

§ 8. *First Coroll.*—That God had an *absolute right* to *predestinate* whom He pleased of His rational creatures to eternal glory. It has been proved before† that the decree of election, or merciful predestination, is not inconsistent with equity; and in the foregoing passages it has been proved that God has, essentially, an absolute right to will and to do whatever is not inequitable: whence the corollary follows, that He has a right to predestinate to eternal glory whom He will.

§ 9. *Second Coroll.*—That God had an *absolute right* to *redeem* some of the human race with a *decretive speciality*. It has been proved before‡ that to extend redemption decretively to some more than to others is perfectly consistent with equity; and it has been now proved that God's right extends to every such object: whence the consequence is inevitable, that particular re-

* See Edwards's Dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World.

† Sect. II., § 9. ‡ Ibid., § 10, &c.

demption, in the sense before explained, is an object worthy of God as a sovereign.

§ 10. *Third Coroll.*—That God has an *absolute right* to confer *special grace* upon, and infuse gracious habits into whom He pleases. That to do this is consistent with equity has been shewn before ;* and we have been *now* proving that God's right is *absolute* as to everything which is not inequitable : from whence it follows, that His right includes the conferring of *special* grace.

§ 11. *Fourth Coroll.*—That God has an *absolute right to determine the will* by His gracious influence. To do this, we have shewn before, is not inequitable ;† and *now* it has been demonstrated that God's right extends to every such object : consequently, there lies no ground of complaint against His determination of the human will by gracious influence on the mind.

§ 12. *Fifth Coroll.*—That God has an *absolute right* to cause, effectually, all those who are *saints* to *persevere* in a state of grace unto eternal salvation. We must observe, as before, that the perseverance of saints has been proved to be not inconsistent with any principle of equity ;‡ and God's right includes every such object, as now proved : therefore the truth of the corollary cannot be impeached.

* Sect. II., § 21, &c. † Ibid., § 26, &c.
‡ Ibid., § 30, &c.

SECTION IV.

WHETHER THE CERTAINTY OR HYPOTHETICAL NECESSITY OF FUTURE EVENTS BE CONSISTENT WITH THAT FREEDOM WHICH IS ESSENTIAL TO MORAL AGENCY.

§ 1. Introduction. The subject not exhausted. § 2. General remarks. § 3. The difference between science, decree, and prescience. § 4. That there are hypothetical tendencies and results independent of all will. § 5. The more freedom is claimed, the more certain the result of it. § 6. The just limits of the liberty of moral agents, and its consistence with hypothetical necessity demonstrated. § 7–10. The rise and progress of the controversy between the Calvinists and Arminians, in which Mr Fletcher took so active a part. § 11. Arminian concessions. § 12. Observations on them. § 13. The chief cause of the different conclusions. § 14. The charge of God being made the author of sin retorted. § 15. The nature of sin. § 16. Self-perversion is not the origin of sin. § 17. Its true origin proved and explained. § 18. The consistency of certainty and moral agency proved from the acknowledged certain futurition of events. § 19. The Arminian account of fore-knowledge insufficient. § 20, 21. A fuller explanation of the present system. § 22–35. Mr Fletcher's most powerful and popular objections against Calvinistic necessity answered; whereby is shewn more fully the truth and importance of the system here maintained, and the weakness of its opposite. § 36. Conclusions from the premises.

§ 1. Of the *three pillars* before mentioned, (Sect. I., § 1,) on which the fabric of Arminianism rests, this is one: That the *certainty*, or, as the Arminians choose to represent the case by a stronger term, the *necessity* of future events is *not consistent* with that *freedom* which is essential to *moral agency*. Dr Whitby strenuously contends that the will is free "as well from *necessity*, as from coaction,"* to which he appropriates several chapters; and one in particular is entitled, "Propounding *Arguments from Reason* to evince this Freedom of the Will from Necessity."† Later Arminians, especially Mr Fletcher, have said much on the subject, though

* On the Five Points, p. 328. † Ibid., p. 344.

candid concessions have sometimes been made, amounting nearly to all for which we contend, in the midst, or at the more sedate close, of the most violent opposition. Mr Jonathan Edwards, without the materialism and *mere* philosophic mechanism of Priestley, or the unguarded bluntness and severe sarcasms of Toplady, made a noble effort to shew that the freedom of the will and moral agency are not inconsistent with *all necessity*. But if we judge from the effect it has produced, we must infer either that his "Inquiry" is not rightly understood by our Arminian friends, or that there is some defect in his mode of representing the subject, since Mr Fletcher has often conceded *the whole* of what Mr Edwards professedly contended for,—*i.e.*, that *freedom* is consistent with *some* necessity. The present writer has long thought, and still thinks, that the subject has by no means been *exhausted*, notwithstanding all he has met with in scholastic and modern divinity, moral philosophy and metaphysics. If any additional or new light is, in these pages, thrown upon the subject, whereby it may be discovered that the *frightful gulfs*, which were supposed by *good people* on the opposite sides to be *impassable*, are *fordable* and perfectly *safe*,—by which means there may be among *such* people a more free exchange of Christian love and evangelical sentiments,—the author will have reason to consider the circumstance as one of the greatest favours conferred upon him by Providence, and one of the highest gratifications of his life.

§ 2. Before we proceed to investigate the sentiments proposed, I would offer a few general remarks:—

(1.) The reader ought not to overlook the *definitions* given of the *terms* under consideration; especially the terms "moral agency" and "necessity."* If by these terms the writer should intend one thing, and the reader understand another, there is little hope of agreement, be the reasoning what it may. What is here asserted, therefore, is, that this *hypothetical necessity*, or in other words, the *truly future certainty* of an event, does not infringe moral agency in the accomplishment of that event.

(2.) Though a great outcry has been made against the *antinomian tendency* of Calvinism in general, and Calvinistic *necessity* in particular, yet all who have a grain of candour left among heaps of prejudice must acknowledge, that those who have held the *substance* of the doctrine here maintained have been uni-

* See above, pp. 53, 64.

formly and equally strenuous for the existence of *moral obligation*, the accountableness of man, and personal holiness, with others who have opposed it; which is at least a sufficient exculpation of them from any *immoral design*. That *bad men* have espoused *both sides* is no just impeachment of either. As, for instance, the *religious character* of President Edwards having never been called in question, our opponents themselves being judges, any more than that of Mr Fletcher, it cannot be inferred that the patrons of hypothetical necessity are *avowed* opposers of moral agency and accountableness, or even that it produces ill effects in those who hold it, *any more* than in those who reject the sentiment. Perhaps, could an estimate be fairly and extensively made, the hypothetical Necessitarians would not appear to disadvantage by the comparison; and, what is more, perhaps the *genuine tendency* of both systems may be shewn to be decidedly in our favour. It is hoped that this publication may assist in such an inquiry.

(3.) Among all *good men*, a regard for the *honour of God*, more than the *rights of man*, is the matter of holy jealousy. And it gives me no small pleasure to reflect that our opposing brethren uniformly and openly avow their acquiescence in these two grand AXIOMS:—

FIRST AXIOM—*All* GOOD *is of* GOD.
SECOND AXIOM—*All* EVIL *is of* OURSELVES.

In the following pages, it is presumed, it will appear that no system of religion or morals, opposite to what is here defended, can be made fairly and truly to agree with *both axioms*.

(4.) Among modern writers of religious respectability, no one has appeared, on the Arminian side of the question, with more polemical acumen, or more open decision, than the Rev. John Fletcher, in his numerous controversial writings. Candour dictates, and the love of real godliness, that Mr Fletcher's character should be held in great esteem. His ardent love of God, and zealous efforts to reform, convert, and save souls; his humbling representations of himself, and warm ascriptions of praise to grace and the Saviour; his usefulness as a minister, and in some respects as a writer; and his worth as a member of society, demand cordial acquiescence. With such acknowledgments, let it not be construed a breach of Christian charity to *examine* his positions and reasonings on the subject before us. It has been often said, that if *all*

good men did but *rightly understand* each other, there would appear much less difference between them than there is; and it is a remark, I am fully persuaded, founded in truth. Should I therefore succeed (which may the God of love and wisdom grant!) in giving the admirers of this writer a more *just*, and therefore a more *conciliatory* view of the *matter of difference* between what he avowedly held, and what I consider as real defensible Calvinism, I shall with heartfelt pleasure infer that I have not lived or laboured in vain. But—

§ 3. What claims our immediate attention is, the *proof* of what is proposed, before we come to notice what has been *objected* to it; which is attempted by the following explanatory *propositions:*—

FIRST PROP.—There is a real and important distinction between *science, decree,* and *prescience,* as applied to God.

(1.) *Science* relates and extends to *all possibles,* with all their diversities and distinctions, as included in the Divine all-sufficiency.

(2.) *Decree,* being an *act* of the *Divine will,* whereby one general system is chosen, in preference to any other, in the numberless ranks of possibles, relates ONLY to the *adopted system.* And as wisdom is essential to Deity, the system chosen must be a *wise* one—*i.e.,* the best calculated to answer the *end* proposed. Consequently, without a decree there can be no actual or positive existence.

(3.) *Prescience* relates to the system so adopted as to its *truly certain futurition. Science,* therefore, relates to what *might* have been, had God willed it to be with an efficient or decretive will; *decree* relates to all actual positive existence, whether past, present, or future; and *prescience* to the certain futurition of such objects.

§ 4. SECOND PROP.—There are *hypothetical tendencies* and results in the very nature of things, irrespective of *all will* concerning them. To elucidate this proposition, observe—

(1.) The Divine *intellect* beholds all possibles, as contained in the Divine all-sufficiency, *individually;* and the Divine *wisdom* beholds the same objects *systematically.*

(2.) That there is a *negative* hypothetical tendency and result, both individually and systematically considered, is demonstrative from the consideration of the *passive power* essential to all created existence. For instance, IF GOD withdraw all support from a creature, it ceases to exist, &c.

(3.) That there is also a *positive* hypothetical tendency and result, relative to the individuals and the system, is equally demonstrative from the consideration of the *Divine efficience.* For instance, IF GOD choose either good or evil, He will certainly choose good; IF He exert creating power, created effects will follow, &c.

§ 5. THIRD PROP.—The more freedom we claim for any creature, the more firmly shall we establish the consequence, that, in the view of God, the tendency and *result* of that freedom is foreseen and provided for. In proof of this proposition observe—

(1.) The freedom of a moral system implies the *possibility* of a deviation from rectitude. This enters into the very foundation of accountableness.

(2.) The *hypothetical result* of every moral system possible is included in the Divine science. But—

(3.) If freedom implies defectibility, and the Divine science, or all-perfect knowledge, sees the hypothetical result of all systems possible; it follows, that a decretive fixedness of *all the good,* from whence results the *certain futurition* of all events, is included in our clear and consistent notion of Divine goodness and wisdom.

If a moral system be formed *free,* in the highest sense conceivable, and there be no *decretive* certainty of the result of it, as far as it is *good;* that system is liable to perpetual ruin without a possibility of being retrieved. For, *as all good is from God,* He must either *decree* the result of it, or, on supposition of failure in the system, *alter His plan;* which alteration to impute to the Divine mind is unworthy of our notion of infinite perfection. If, therefore, it be unworthy of an infinite mind alike to operate *without* a plan, and to *alter* a plan once formed, and if nothing can be to HIM absolutely contingent, the consequence is unavoidable, that the *more free* the system is, the more *liable* it is to perpetual *ruin,* without a possibility of being corrected and retrieved, if the goodness of the result be not decreed; an omission which is incompatible with the Divine *goodness.*

Again; to create a system which may rush to ruin, without making a *decretive provision* for the hypothetical *good result* of it, is inconsistent with all just notions of perfect *wisdom.* Nor can it be questioned, without denying the first *axiom,* that if the result be *good,* it must be of *God.* And that it should be of God, without His *will,* or decretive purpose, is impossible.

First Coroll.—The higher we carry our supposition of *liberty,*

the more firmly, in the genuine consequence, do we establish a decretive hypothetical *necessity*. The more I am left to *my own* disposal, the more *necessary* is it for God to *take care of the result;* and to give *efficiency* for the production of good, in such a manner as to *secure* a result worthy of His wisdom and goodness in giving *existence* to the moral system.

Second Coroll.—That there should be in the universe such a *liberty* in accountable creatures, or free agents, as excludes the *infallible certainty* of any future event, is impossible.

§ 6. FOURTH PROP.—A moral agent has no more *liberty* than what is needful to constitute his accountableness. For—

(1.) In all those cases where accountableness is *not concerned*, philosophical necessity is incontrovertible. The irrational part of the world is complete mechanism, a mechanism truly wonderful, and worthy of its Author! For what has no *moral* defect is worthy of a Being infinitely perfect decretively to *appoint*, and powerfully to *effectuate*. Yet—

(2.) Were not the *result* of moral agency *known* to God, that result, be it what it may, (though, by the by, it could not be *good* but by His *efficiency*,) would be an everlasting monument of degradation to His goodness and wisdom. But—

(3.) For the knowledge of this result there must be *some* assignable reason, or ground of certainty, in opposition to perfect contingence. To deny this, would be to advance contradictions without cause; except it be the forming of a convenient plea to conceal, or rather to detect ignorance. Wherefore—

(4.) Inasmuch as *all* creatures which are *not accountable* are the subjects of *necessity*, to the exclusion of that liberty which is exercised about moral good and evil; and *all* creatures, without exception, have a *passive power*, and an infallible *hypothetical tendency*, from the very nature of their dependence; hence it follows, that no created being, and consequently no moral agent, has more liberty than what is needful to constitute his *accountableness*.

(5.) What constitutes *accountableness*, from our definition, is a *capacity* to enjoy the chief good; *means* of preserving rectitude, or of not sinning, both suitable and sufficient; a *power* which excludes all *absolute* necessity of sinning, or abusing means; and an *instrumental* power of improving them.

Now, as these grounds of accountableness are perfectly con-

sistent with hypothetical necessity, and as a moral agent has no more liberty than what is needful to constitute his accountableness, it irrefragably follows, that *hypothetical necessity is not inconsistent with moral agency. Q.E.D.*

§ 7. To the generality of readers, who are not accustomed to abstract reasoning and metaphysical precision, the method which considers the sentiments, and examines the *objections*, of the most able and ingenious writers in the opposition, is most instructive and convincing. The ability and celebrity of Mr Fletcher, as a writer against the Calvinistic system in general, and especially that part of it which is the subject of the present article, have been before observed; and this consideration, in my view, justifies a peculiar attention to his arguments and objections, as far as our immediate inquiry is concerned.

By way of *introduction* to the examination we propose, it will not be improper, or unacceptable to the reader, to notice the *occasion* of his engaging so warmly on the Arminian side, especially as this may throw some light on his *mode of expression.* This I shall endeavour to do with all possible brevity.

In August 1770, the Rev. John Wesley, and the preachers in his Connexion, held a *conference* in London. Of the conversation which then passed some *minutes* were made and printed. From these minutes* an extract was made and annexed to a circular printed letter, drawn up and signed by the Hon. and Rev. Walter Shirley, purporting, that as Mr Wesley's conference was to be held at Bristol on the approaching August 6th, 1771, it was proposed by many Christian friends to have a meeting there at the

* Some of the expressions in that conference were :—"Take heed to your doctrine. We said, 1744, *We have leaned too much to Calvinism.* Wherein? 1. With regard to *man's faithfulness.* 2. With regard to *working for life.* 3. We have received it as a maxim, That a man is to do nothing *in order* to justification: Nothing can be more false."

Again :—"Is not this [*i.e.*, he that is *sincere* is accepted of God] *salvation by works?* Not by the *merit* of works, but by works as a *condition.*—As to *merit* itself, of which we have been so dreadfully afraid: We are rewarded *according to our works*, yea, *because of our works.* How does this differ from *for the sake of our works?* And how differs this from *secundum merita operum?* As our works *deserve?* Can you split this hair? I doubt, I cannot."

Finally :—"Does not talking of a justified or sanctified *state* tend to mislead men? Almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing God, *according to our works?* According to the whole of our inward tempers, and outward behaviour."—*Vide Mr Fletcher's Vindic. Pref.*

same time, of such principal persons, both clergy and laity, who disapproved of the minutes; in order that, provided a formal recantation of the said minutes were not made, they should sign and publish their *protest* against them. The letter concludes with these words:—"It is submitted to you, whether it would not be right, in the opposition to be made to such a *dreadful heresy*, to recommend it to as many of your Christian friends, as well of the Dissenters as of the Established Church, as you can prevail on to be there, the cause being of so *public* a nature."

§ 8. This circular printed letter roused Mr Fletcher to write "A Vindication of the Rev. Mr Wesley's last Minutes," consisting of five letters addressed to Mr Shirley, the author of it. To other more private reasons which Mr Fletcher assigns for siding with Mr Wesley on this occasion, he adds the following:—"The leave you give both Churchmen and Dissenters, to direct to *you* their answers to your circular letter, is my excuse for intruding upon you this epistle, and my apology for begging your candid attention, while I attempt to convince you that my friend's principles and minutes are not heretical: in order to this I shall lay before you, and the principal persons, both clergy and laity, whom you have from all parts of England and Wales convened at Bristol, by printed letters, a General View of the Rev. Mr Wesley's doctrine,—an Account of the commendable design of his minutes,—a Vindication of the propositions which they contain." This Vindication, finished July 29, 1771, about five weeks, I believe, after the appearance of the circular, was sent in *manuscript* to Bristol. To the honour of truth and religion be it observed, that the spirit manifested at the Bristol conference was amiable; but the controversy to which these small beginnings gave rise was of no small magnitude.

The Vindication of the Minutes was considered by the author and his party as a seasonable *check* to Antinomianism. Mr Shirley wrote a "Narrative" of the business; Mr Fletcher publishes a "Second Check to Antinomianism," in letters addressed to the same author; this Second Check is followed by a publication of "Letters" addressed to Mr Fletcher by the respectable author of "Pietas Oxoniensis;" Mr Fletcher publishes, early in 1772, a "Third Check to Antinomianism," in reply to that author; that author again rejoins in a series of Letters, and his rev. brother, Mr R. Hill, by "Friendly Remarks;" in reply to both, Mr Fletcher pro-

duces "Logica Genevensis; or, A Fourth Check to Antinomianism," in a series of letters to those gentlemen; R. Hill, Esq., author of the former productions, publishes "The Finishing Stroke;" Mr Fletcher replies in his "Logica Genevensis Continued; or, The First Part of the Fifth Check to Antinomianism;" and at the same time the Second Part of the same Check, addressed to Mr Berridge, author of the "Christian World Unmasked."

§ 9. Now Mr Fletcher stops a little to take breath, after so long a polemical career, and to take a more comprehensive view of *both sides* of the controverted questions. After this deliberate survey came out "The First Part of an Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism," consisting of Essays, &c.; and soon after, the Second Part of an Equal Check, under a new title: "Zelotes and Honestus Reconciled; or, An Equal Check to Pharisaism and Antinomianism Continued: being the First Part of the Scripture Scales." This was published at the close of the year 1774, and followed the next year by "The Second Part of the Scripture Scales, with Mr Hill's Fictitious, and Mr Fletcher's Genuine Creed for Arminians." Prefixed to the "Scripture Scales" is an advertisement, of which the following is an abstract:—"The author of the 'Checks' has promised to his readers an Answer to the Rev. Mr Toplady's piece, entitled, 'More Work for Mr Wesley.' His reason for postponing *that part* of his 'Logica Genevensis,' was the importance of the 'Equal Check,' which closes the controversy with Mr Hill. He saw life so uncertain, that, of two things which he was obliged to do, he thought it his duty to set about that which appeared to him the *more useful*. He considered, also, that it was quite proper to have quite done with Mr Hill before he faced so able a writer as Mr Toplady." And, *as contents* of his preface to the last part of "Zelotes and Honestus Reconciled; or, Second Part of Scripture Scales," he says:—"The Reconciler invites the contending parties to end the controversy; and, in order to this, he beseeches them not to involve the question in clouds of evasive cavils or personal reflections, but to come to the point, and break, if they can, either the one or the other of the 'Scripture Scales;' and if they cannot, to admit them both, and by that means to give glory to God and the truth, and be reconciled to all the gospel, and to one another." Before the controversy with R. Hill, Esq., was *finally* closed, one volume more was published by Mr Fletcher, as a kind of supplement to his former 'Creeds,' as men-

tioned in his preface to that volume, entitled, "The Last Check to Antinomianism, a Polemical Essay," &c. His own words are:—"If the reader desires to know why I call it also a '*Polemical* Essay,' he is informed that R. Hill, Esq., (at the end of a pamphlet entitled, 'Three Letters Written to the Rev. J. Fletcher, Vicar of Madely,') has published a 'Creed for Arminians and Perfectionists.' The ten first articles of this 'Creed,' which respect the Arminians, I have already answered in 'The Fictitious and Genuine Creed;' and the following sheets contain my reply to the last article, which entirely refers to the *Perfectionists*." *

§ 10. Our author now faces his very powerful antagonist, the Rev. Augustus Toplady, the author of "Historic Proof of the Calvinism of the Church of England;" and, in 1776, publishes "An Answer to Mr Toplady's 'More Work for Mr J. Wesley; or, A Vindication of the Decrees,'" &c. He introduces the "Answer" with this remark, among others of the same tendency:—"When I had sent for, and read this admired book, I promised my readers to demonstrate, from that very book, the inconclusiveness of the strongest arguments by which Calvinism is supported." In the meantime, Mr Toplady publishes the "Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity," which occasioned Mr Fletcher's "Reply to the Principal Arguments by which the Calvinists and Fatalists support the Doctrine of Absolute Necessity," published in 1777. In the course of the following year, Mr Fletcher's prolific pen furnished the public with a work, entitled, "The Doctrines of Grace and Justice Equally Essential to the Pure Gospel; with some Remarks on the Mischievous Divisions caused among Christians by Parting those Doctrines: being an Introduction to a Plan of *Reconciliation* between the Defenders of the Doctrine of *Partial Grace*, commonly called Calvinists, and the Defenders of the Doctrines of *Impartial Justice*, commonly called Arminians." This publication includes some interesting remarks on grace and justice, and the "Reconciliation; or, An Easy Method to *Unite* the Professing People of God, by placing the Doctrines of Grace and Justice in such a Light as to make the candid Arminians Bible-Calvinists, and the candid Calvinists Bible-Arminians." It includes also "A Twofold Essay —*i.e.*, Bible-Arminianism and Bible-Calvinism:" the *first* of these "displaying the doctrines of partial grace, and the excellence of Scripture Calvinism; the *second*, the doctrines of impartial justice,

* Last Check, Pref., p. 6.

and the excellence of Scripture Arminianism." He then adds a further "Reconciliation," by way of inferences from the "Twofold Essay;" the *plan* of a general "Reconciliation," with "some Directions how to secure the blessings of peace and brotherly love, with further motives to a speedy reconciliation." Then follows "An Exhortation" to conclude the whole, in a spirit and style truly Christian. The topics are weighty, and the zeal with which they are urged is warm and loving.

It is hoped that this brief account of the rise and progress of a controversy between the Calvinists and Arminians, the most important and interesting on many accounts, I believe, which has appeared in the course of the present century, will not prove unacceptable to the reader who has not had opportunity of better information, or appear an unsuitable introduction to our professed *examination* of the most radical arguments and forcible objections of Modern Arminianism; and more especially as our *Essay* has for its object, at least in good part, a *better understanding* between persons, ministers, and people, who are *truly devoted to God*, than hitherto they have had.

§ 11. The reader will recollect, that we consider the subject of the present article as of the utmost importance, in order to arrive at a fair issue. To *this point* were all the controversial lines brought at the close of Mr Fletcher's polemical efforts; and there, I add, he discovers at once the weakness of his *arguments*, and the failure of his *cause*. I cannot help observing here, that Mr Fletcher at his first setting out, in his Vindication of the Minutes, acknowledges most explicitly, in connexion with Mr Wesley, what appears to me virtually to imply my conclusion.

(1.) Man's *total fall*, and his *utter inability* to recover himself. Speaking of Mr Wesley he observes:—"For above these sixteen years I have heard him frequently in his chapels, and sometimes in my church; I have familiarly conversed and corresponded with him, and have often perused his numerous works in verse and prose; and I can truly say, that during all that time I have heard him, upon every proper occasion, steadily maintain the *total fall* of man in Adam, and his *utter inability* to recover himself, or to take any *one step towards* his recovery, without the *grace* of God preventing him that he may have a *good will*, and working with him when he has that good will. The deepest expressions that ever

struck my ears, on the melancholy subject of our natural *depravity* and helplessness, are those which dropped from his lips."*

This testimony is confirmed by Mr Wesley himself:—"I always did (for between these thirty and forty years) clearly assert the *total fall* of man, and his *utter inability* to do *any good of himself;* the *absolute necessity* † of the grace and Spirit of God to raise even a *good thought* or *desire* in our hearts; the Lord's rewarding no work, and accepting of none, but so far as they proceed from His *preventing, convincing,* and *converting grace* through the Beloved."‡

Nay, Mr Fletcher considers this doctrine of such magnitude, that he considers it the "leading principle in Christianity, distinguished from Deism—of such importance, that genuine Christianity stands or falls with it." § Expressions which are followed by a professed "rational demonstration of man's corrupt and lost estate."

(2.) That *all our salvation is of God in Christ,* and therefore *of grace;* but *all our damnation* is of *ourselves.* "Mr Wesley lays down," says Mr Fletcher, "two axioms of which he never loses sight in his preaching. The first is, that ALL OUR SALVATION IS OF GOD IN CHRIST, and therefore OF GRACE; all opportunities, invitations, inclination, and power to believe being bestowed upon us of mere grace—grace most absolutely free: but he proceeds further, for, secondly, he asserts, with equal confidence, that according to the gospel dispensation ALL OUR DAMNATION IS OF OURSELVES; by our obstinate unbelief and avoidable unfaithfulness; as we may *neglect* so great salvation, desire to be *excused* from coming to the feast of the Lamb, *make light* of God's gracious offers, *refuse* to occupy, *bury* our talent, and act the part of the *slothful* servant; or, in other words, resist, grieve, do despite to, and quench the Spirit of grace BY OUR MORAL AGENCY." Mr Fletcher adds, "He is therefore persuaded the most complete system of divinity is that in which neither of those two axioms is

* Vindication of Minutes, p. 9.

† Here Mr Wesley must understand the term "absolute" in a vague and popular sense, else he asserts a stronger kind of necessity, with regard to the existence and power of grace, than the Calvinists themselves.

‡ Vindication of Minutes, p. 21.

§ Appeal to Matter of Fact, &c., pp. 11, 12, 4th Edition.

superseded; it is bold and unscriptural to set up the one at the expense of the other."*

§ 12. On these remarkable positions I would observe—

(1.) If *all* men be so *totally* fallen, and *utterly* unable to do anything of themselves, previous to Divine *grace*, so that grace makes all the difference in the man respecting his *thoughts, will*, and obediential *steps;* and as it is absurd to suppose that the *grace received* renders him *less dependent* on the *will* and *operation* of God than he was before, or that this grace has an existence in the man somewhat *detached* from the Divine will and operation which first caused it; it follows that EVERY GOOD *thought, will*, and *work*, both first and last, must proceed from the *positive will of God*. But if so, He must not only have *foreseen* but also *foreordained* such *good thoughts*, &c. Therefore, all the good in man is derived from a *necessity of consequence*. And, indeed, what possible medium can there be between such necessity of good, and absolute contingence,—a contingence *absolutely* impossible, as may be abundantly proved?

(2.) If, according to the *first axiom*, ALL our salvation is of God, even all *inclination* and *power* to believe; and it is absurd to imagine that any of that all is of God to the *exclusion* of His will and energy; we must infer that ALL our salvation is from the will and energy, and therefore the *purpose* of God. Wherefore, all our salvation flows from a *necessity of consequence*. And as we maintain free agency as well as our opponents, we conclude, from their own premises and concessions, that hypothetical necessity and free agency are *not inconsistent*.

(3.) But Mr Fletcher, after Mr Wesley, according to the second axiom, holds that *all* our damnation is of *ourselves*. And so do *we*. Yes, but he ascribes it to AVOIDABLE unfaithfulness, by our MORAL AGENCY. And so do *we also*, if by "avoidable" is meant that there is no *absolute* necessity why any should fail of salvation, or that there is no *positive* will, purpose, or decree *against* it. And this "avoidableness" is in virtue of "moral agency;" as freedom from all positive urgency, or influence to evil *out of ourselves*, is essential to it. Consequently, from the premises laid down by our opponents themselves, it follows, that the kind of necessity for which we plead, and moral agency, are *perfectly compatible*.

* Vindication of Minutes, pp. 17, 18.

§ 13. Why, therefore, was Mr Fletcher so exceedingly alarmed at the doctrine taught by President Edwards, since the doctrine in general he contended for was only an inference drawn, fairly drawn, from Mr Fletcher's own premises? And why does he call this very doctrine which he and Mr Wesley have taught us to maintain, "the grand error which supports the Calvinian and Voltairian gospels?"*

The only reasons I can assign for so wide a difference, and so warm a contest, between Mr Fletcher and his opponents, while their premises appeared to admit of the same conclusions, are such as these:—

(1.) Calvin, Toplady, and, perhaps I may add, Edwards himself, were not sufficiently plain and explicit in rejecting what certainly they ought to have rejected, the supposition that *sin is one link* in the chain of *decretive* necessity. Hence—

(2.) Mr Fletcher takes up the notion that President Edwards, and all other Calvinists, "join their literary forces to bind man with the extensive series of adamantine links which form the chain of *absolute necessity.*"† While the subject was taken up in this way, and therefore inferred "that the monster *sin* is the offspring of God's providence, necessitation, creation, of God's will, of God himself,"‡ what probability was there that the truth in question could be found, or an accommodation effected between the contending parties?

One party, strenuous for the honour of grace, but without ascertaining the *basis* on which rests the *difference* between the causation of *good* and the origin of *evil*, were only concerned to maintain the necessity of consequence, or rather *some kind* of necessity, in general, to the exclusion of absolute contingency; while the other party thought it enough to exhibit in the most hideous and horrible colours the dire consequences which the doctrine of *absolute* necessity draws after it. But as the present work disavows, no less than Mr Fletcher's, that pedigree of sin which he is pleased to pronounce "*Calvinian*," but in reality is not so, may we not hope that those who have been under this too common mistake will candidly *re-examine* the subject, and adopt the just conclusion? For we not only acknowledge that all sin *is* from *ourselves*, but have undertaken to demonstrate, from first prin-

* Reply to the Calvinists, Introd., p. 4.
† Ibid. ‡ Ibid., p. 6.

ciples, that it *must* be so; and that to the *utter exclusion* of the Arminian *self-sovereignty* of the will.

§ 14. But while we keep clear of both absurdities, shewing on the one hand that sin is no more *caused* or *appointed* by the First Cause, than cold is caused by the sun, or darkness by light; and on the other, that self-sovereignty, in the common Arminian sense, can no more exist in a created nature, however exalted, than absolute independence; we think that the Arminian account of the generation of sin is *positively* and exceedingly dishonourable to God. Beginning with sin, they trace its genealogy no higher than man's *free-will*. These are Mr Fletcher's words:—"When you begin at *sin*, you can never ascend higher than *free-will*; and when you begin at *God*, you can never descend lower than *free-will*."* But is not God the *author* of that free-will?—a *positive cause* of, what they hold sin to be, a *positive effect*? And is not this making God the AUTHOR OF SIN?

We, no less than our opponents, refer sin to the *free-will* of the creature as the *immediate* or secondary cause; but instead of tracing it thence, with the Fatalists, to the First Cause, or stopping there, to save *appearances*, with self-determiners, but who *really* must refer it ultimately to God, we trace it to the *essential defectibility* of a created nature, which is necessarily implied in the essential *difference* that must ever subsist between a self-existent and a created nature. So that if the matter be well considered, God can be no more the author of sin, *in any sense whatever*, than He can be a *dependent* being; and, on the contrary, man's *free-will* can be no more the *ultimate origin* of sin, than man can be the *necessary* cause of himself. These consequences may not strike the reader at first view, but are fairly implied in the premises.

So far, therefore, is *sin* from being, as Mr Fletcher represents it, the *seventh link* of the chain of Calvinism, and of which God is the first, that it is *no link* of it; so far from being the effect of six preceding voluntary impelling causes, *velut unda impellitur undâ*, it is neither impelled nor countenanced by *any* of them. Not by God himself, the first of the chain; for a Being infinitely good cannot be the decretive cause, or indeed *any cause* of the greatest evil, any more than He can be a *defectible* Being; and if

* Reply, p. 7.

not God himself, neither also His will, decree, creating acts, necessitation, or impelling providence.

§ 15. Much misunderstanding in this debate has arisen from want of agreement respecting the *nature* of sin. We consider it as "want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God," or a *defect* of what *ought* to be, whether in disposition or act. Mr Fletcher, on the contrary, contends that it is "a *real thing*, and has a *positive cause*."* This he thought to establish by what he thought an unanswerable part of a dilemma :—"If sin *is* a real thing, or a *positive* moral crookedness of the will of a sinner, and as such has a *positive cause*, can that positive cause be any other than the *self-perversion* of free-will, or the *impelling decree* of a sin-ordaining God?"† The latter supposition is chargeable with impious irrationality; and we say the former is removed but a few degrees from it. Sin is the offspring of self-perversion, this of free-will, and free-will is the offspring of God; all, on the supposition, positive causes of positive effects. Consequently, sin, according to the Arminian system, is fastened on infinite purity by these adamantine links—God's *creating will* in making us free, and our created *freedom*, which is the grand parent of every sin!

While men ascribe to sin a *positive entity* as opposed to *moral defect*, they either give to the free-will of men and devils a *creating* power, which is absurd; or else they must trace up sin *actually* to God. For their free-will was *imposed* upon them by *creating will;* they were *necessitated* to have it; and from hence positive effects follow to the remotest acts of sin. But this is diametrically opposite to our first *axiom*. The absurdity, and indeed the impiety of such a consequence, is fully sufficient to expose Mr Fletcher's notion of the *nature* of sin, as to the point in question.

But how does Mr Fletcher defend *his* notion? "If it is no *real thing*, and has no *positive* cause, why does God positively send the wicked to hell for a privation, which they have not positively caused?"‡ Besides, according to him, if sin be only a *moral defect*, "it absurdly follows, that crookedness, or the want of straightness in a line, is a mere *privation* also." But which is most absurd, to father sin on infinite purity, or to admit that crookedness is a privation? Mr Fletcher thinks that reason and feeling are so much on his side as to render null all arguments :—"Reason

* Reply, p. 15. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

and feeling tell us, that the crookedness of a crooked line, is something every way as positive as the straightness of a straight line. To deny it is as ridiculous as to assert that a circle is a *not-being*, because it is not made of straight lines like a square."* In this representation there is one little circumstance omitted, to make the comparison a fair one. We say, that sin is a *moral* defect, a defect of what *ought* to be ; and surely, if a line which *ought* to be straight, be found crooked, its crookedness is a *defect;* if a figure which *ought* to be a square, be found in fact a circle, its form is a *defect.*

The other inquiry, "Why does God positively send the wicked to hell for a privation which they have not positively caused?" admits of a reasonable solution. For we maintain, that the *nature* of future punishment consists in the *want* of the chief good, together with a *consciousness* of that want; and which implies all that is described in Scripture, however awful, of a future state of suffering. Besides, the *penal* evil of moral agents is not the *arbitrary* act of God, but the *natural* effect of sin. Therefore, though sin be a *moral defect,* the consequence of it is a *great evil.*

§ 16. For the sake of looking at the opposite principles in various lights, and following them to their just consequences, let us hear the author's account of the generation of sin. "A *sinful act* is the offspring of a *sinful choice;* a sinful choice is the offspring of *self-perversion;* and self-perversion *may* or *may not* follow from *free-will* put in a state of probation, or under a practicable law."† But if the nature of sin be not a *moral defect,* this account does not solve the difficulty. For to remove sin from *free-will* to *self-perversion,* is only to remove the difficulty into the dark, lest it should be further examined. Bring it to the light, and you may soon observe its argumentative nakedness.

What is this said self-perversion? Is it a *good* or an *evil?* Is it a something *right* or *wrong?* If *evil* and *wrong,* why should it be represented as the *parent* of a *sinful choice,*—is it not itself a sin?—except we say that *sin* exists in the mind *prior* to any choice, and yet *free-will* is ultimate ancestor of sin? A genealogy this, full of confusion and contradictions. Will it be said that self-perversion is a something *good* and *right?* This cannot be ; for it is what *may* or *may not* follow from free-will, in such a manner that if it *do* follow, it becomes the parent of a sinful choice ; and

* Reply, p. 7. † Ibid., p. 15.

if it *do not* follow, or has *no existence*, then, and only then, sin is prevented. Self-perversion then must be a *bad* thing, a *sin*, and the *cause* of a sinful *choice;* but if so, if the choice be *sinful because* it originates in self-perversion, how can self-perversion, which is a *sin*, originate in choice or free-will?

I ask again, What is this *self-perversion?* If a *sin*, it is of little use to bring it forward in order to solve the difficulty of *sin's generation.* But if it be said to be neither good nor evil, right nor wrong in itself, then it must, I think, be acknowledged to be either, (1.) Another *power* of the mind, different from the will; or, (2.) A *modification* of the mind; or, (3.) What we contend for,—*i.e.*, the *essential defectibility* of a created nature, as such, from whence arises a *moral defect*, which nothing but *unmerited grace* can prevent, or, if not actually prevented, remove.

Let us briefly examine each.

First, If self-perversion, the immediate parent of a sinful choice, be *another power* of the mind different from the will, God must be the *voluntary author* of it, as He is of all our other powers. But this representation of it as another *power*, probably, will not be asserted.

Secondly, If self-perversion be a *modification* of the mind, an *effect* of a power,—distinguished from *freedom, αὐτεξουσιον, a self-determining* POWER, as an effect from a cause,—while at the same time sin is held to be a positive effect of a positive cause, who sees not the horrible necessary consequences of it? If self-perversion, thus understood, and which seems to be our author's meaning in common with other Arminians, be the effect or offspring of freedom, and freedom the offspring of God; it follows unavoidably, that the scheme I am opposing makes infinite holiness to be the source of sin, and with *fewer* links between than was ascribed to Mr Toplady's chain of necessity. A *sinful choice* is the offspring of self-perversion; self-perversion is the offspring of *free-will;* and free-will is the offspring of *God.* Whereas Mr Toplady, by Mr Fletcher's own statement, removed sin from God to the *seventh* link of the chain.

Thus it appears that Mr Fletcher, from a pious zeal, indeed, to vindicate the Divine perfections and government, coupled with a strong *indiscriminate* opposition to what he calls "Calvinian necessity," falls into the evil which he wished to avoid. To put the salvo, "which *may* or *may not* follow from free-will," is of no

avail; since we are speaking of the *actual generation* of *actual sin.* When we are speaking of the genealogy of a person, it would be curious to hear a man say, in order to avoid a difficulty in the evidence of his pedigree, that *another* much better, instead of the real one, *might have been* the descendant of his progenitor! And this, in order to avoid *all* necessity, is the genuine language of our opponents.

§ 17. Thirdly, But as neither of the *former* ideas couched under the term *self-perversion* can contribute to account for the *true cause* of sin, the word, as used by Mr Fletcher, must mean either *nothing* at all, or what we contend for,—that is, the *defectibility* which is essential to a created nature, as opposed to the uncreated. Here the inquisitive mind has a rational resting-place; here conviction must strike every one that understands the subject; and here, we are constrained to say, it *ought* to be, and *must* be fixed. Yes, we have not only a *rational,* but also a *devotional* resting-place. The soul, thus situated, is awfully surrounded with ineffable rays of Divine glories. From this point we view every perfection of Deity, both natural and moral, shining with resplendent lustre. Here we see the most exalted *creature,* in comparison with the all-sufficient and self-existent God, dependent, impotent, undeserving, mean, the mere shadow (if I may so express myself) of unoriginated existence, and very little removed from nothing and vanity; and that creature, if the subject of moral defect, "*less* than nothing and vanity."

Now, as this *difference* between the Creator and creature is not founded in the *Divine will,* as if the sovereign pleasure *might* have ordered it otherwise, but in His *necessary nature;* it follows, that essential defectibility, the parent of sin, is not imputable to the Divine volition. The *prevention* of sin, by positive communications to influence the *disposition,* and everything *good,* is indeed imputable to God as willing, decreeing, creating, providing, and hypothetically necessitating the same; but for the *production* of sin, the essential weakness of the creature is *alone* sufficient, without any positive cause. This, in other words, is the *hypothetical necessity of things.* It is called *hypothetical,* in opposition to *antecedent.* For there was no antecedent necessity that a creature should exist; but IF, or on the *hypothesis* that he *do* exist, it is *necessary,* and not a matter of *mere will,* that he should exist on

the condition of *absolute dependence* on the First Cause, and so be in himself *essentially defectible.*

Again; it is not *antecedently* necessary that God should manifest His JUSTICE *ad extra,* giving to the accountable being nothing more than his *due;* but IF this be done, such being will shew himself to be *what he is,* by a necessary consequence—viz., essentially different from, and in *contrast* with the infinitely perfect God.

Should any be disposed to say, This is to exist on *a hard condition,* I would answer with St Paul, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" But if an answer in a more direct philosophical manner be demanded, we may say, The *hypothetical nature of things* will admit of no other condition on which we can possibly exist; and if any one contest the point, let him know that it is a contest about *superiority* between a sinful worm of the earth and the adorable Jehovah! In a word, to deny sin to be *ultimately* the offspring of *hypothetical* necessity, though *immediately* of ourselves, is to say it is *possible* the situation of Creator and creature may be *reversed!*

§ 18. Mr Fletcher admits of "the *necessity of prophecy,* or of *truly certain futurity,* which considers an event *certainly* future."* And elsewhere he observes:—"One of the most common mistakes, on which the Calvinists found their doctrine, is confounding a *necessity of consequence* with an *absolute necessity.* A necessity of consequence is the necessary connexion which immediate causes have with their effects, immediate effects with their causes, and unavoidable consequences with their premises."† *This* necessity, it seems, our author had no objection to; and yet President Edwards is coupled with Voltaire because he pleaded for *necessity!* Who now confounds *necessity of consequence* and *absolute necessity,* Mr Fletcher the Arminian, or Jonathan Edwards the Calvinist? For it is notorious to the most superficial reader of Edwards, and from his most explicit definitions, that he pleads not for *absolute* necessity, but for that of *consequence,*—the very same which Mr Fletcher allows! But we must not leave this concession without a few remarks:—

(1.) Prophecies relate to *bad* actions as well as *good.* Now, if sin, or the sinfulness of an action, be anything but a *moral defect,*

* Reply, pp. 10, 11. † Ibid., p. 45.

a want of what *ought* to be, it must have a positive cause, which runs up, by means of self-perversion and free-will, to the *creating Cause* of that will. And therefore the actions foretold by prophecy, and certainly future, must have God for their *primary impelling* cause. It was, for instance, in the days of prophecy, and from eternity, *certainly* future, that wicked men should crucify Jesus Christ. This atrocious deed, on the Arminian system, would be the *effect* of self-perversion, and *that* the *effect* of free-will, and this latter the *effect* of God's creating power and *will*. Consequently, this hypothesis makes the most atrocious *evil* to be an effect, of which *God*, by a few removes, is the cause, the impelling cause, *velut unda impellitur undâ*.

(2.) If *some* bad actions, not as moral defects, but positive effects of a positive cause, proceed from self-perversion, from freedom, and consequently the Author of that freedom, for the same reason *all* bad actions *might*. I say more; *all*, according to that system, *must* be referred to God. No *logica Arminiana*, or enchantment, can ever break this chain. If *all sin* be a *positive* effect of self-perversion, and if self-perversion be the *positive* effect of freedom, and if freedom be the *positive* effect of the Divine providential and creating will,—*all sin* terminates in the First Cause of our existence, as a *positive effect* of His will.

Mr Fletcher's remark is very just, "It is the property of error to be inconsistent," and holds peculiarly true in the present case. What our brethren profess a wish to avoid, above everything, is the sentiment, that God is the author or voluntary causer of sin; and yet no sentiment so truly leads to this conclusion, or in a more direct manner than theirs. Even Mr Toplady's doctrine, in the *worst view* of it, Mr Fletcher himself being judge, placed sin at a greater distance from God than what Arminians, to be consistent with themselves, are obliged to do.

(3.) If, as Mr Fletcher allows, there is a "necessity of prophecy," or an event foreseen and foretold to be *certainly future*, the proposition asserting this event is a *true* proposition, and the subject and predicate of it must be truly and *certainly* connected. Mr Fletcher's distinction, therefore, between "that which DOES NOT FAIL *to happen*," and "that which CANNOT ABSOLUTELY FAIL *to happen*,"* appears groundless. For in proportion as you admit the proposition, "a thing prophesied of *may possibly fail* to hap-

* Reply, p. 11.

pen," you destroy the *connexion* between the subject and predicate which affirms it to be *truly* and certainly future. And the conclusion, in that case, would be, the prophecy *may possibly* be a *false assertion!*

(4.) If *some* things may be foreseen and foretold to be truly and certainly future, and the crimes of men not excepted, for the same reason *all things* may be so; and without any more impeachment of the Divine character than Mr Fletcher would have attached to it. If there be, as he admits, *no* deduction from the holiness and equity of God in admitting the *necessity* of such prophecy as is *actually* declared, neither will there be, by admitting the necessity of *any other* future fact which *might have been* declared; except we should say that God has declared *all He knows.* Especially when we consider that His *declaring* a thing to be future is not the *necessitating cause* of its futurition, for another cause of its existence must *precede* its declaration.

§ 19. Here, then, we must at length coincide, that *every* thing and event in futurity is foreseen as *truly certain.* But a great difference lies between us as to the mode of accounting for this fact. Arminians ascribe this knowledge of the *certain futurition* of events to the *Divine omniscience* in such a manner, as that it foresees every mind, every free-will, every "voluntary unnecessitated *obedience* on the part of those who make a *good* use of their free-will;" and every "voluntary unnecessitated *disobedience,* on the part of those who make a *bad* use of it."* But this account leaves you quite in the dark, for it makes God *as much* the author of *sin* as of *holiness,* obedience being as much *unnecessitated* as disobedience. To which we may add, since God is *as much* the parent of one man's free-will as of another's, He bears the *same* relation to disobedience as He does to obedience.

Here, again, we have met, and, may we not say, foiled our opponents, "at the back door of their inconsistency?" Mr Fletcher's great outcry against Calvinism was, that, as he thought, it led to *Manicheism;* and to avoid this frightful bugbear, he fell back upon *free-will* as the supreme parent of obedience and disobedience, *good* and *evil.* May not this *free-will,* therefore, be complimented as a *Manichean Deity?*

But this is not all: *free-will* itself is, we all allow, the offspring of *God.* Does not the Arminian system, then, as held by Mr

* Reply, p. 7.

Fletcher, in a direct and barefaced manner, father upon the Author of our nature both *good* and *evil?* And is not this as direct Manicheism as Mr Fletcher ever fathered on Mr Toplady's scheme ill understood?

§ 20. Not content with barely shewing the inconsistency and absurd consequences of the system I am opposing, it is my wish, if possible, to give my readers fully to understand the system I am now establishing, under the name of *true Calvinism*, in opposition to Mr Fletcher's *frightful picture* of what he is pleased to call, on every occasion, "Calvinian necessity." What is now pleaded for is utterly repugnant to the hypotheses that make *all actions*, the good and bad alike, to proceed from the *Divine decrees*. For—

(1.) *Bad* actions, as before observed, arise from *ourselves*, as *essentially*, not *decretively* defectible, and not from a *positively good* self-determining *principle*, the absurd and impossible source to which Arminians refer them. It will not avail to say that the *abuse* of free-will, and not free-will itself, is the cause of sin; for such *abuse*, if anything *bad*, is itself the first-born of sins. Is it not astonishing that inquisitive free-willers, in the Arminian sense of the word, do not see the necessary consequence of their doctrine, that it makes God himself the positive cause and ordainer of sin?

(2.) Instead of representing the blessed God as a fountain sending forth "sweet water and bitter," the present system represents the adorable Creator as the source of *good only*, and of *all good*, universally and continually. We say that evil, or *moral defect*, originates in *ourselves*, that is, our essential defectibility, in such a manner that *God alone* can prevent its existence; and that, not in virtue of equity but of sovereign *favour*. The denial of this is, in fact, the same thing as to say, that God might, if He pleased, make a creature which needed no support, and with whom His providence had no concern.

§ 21. But, still more closely to pursue our subject, what is this essential *defectibility*, or what is the *hypothetical nature of things?* Is not God the author of that being who is thus defectible? Yes, of the *being*, but not of his *defectibility*. His existence and natural powers are the effect of the *positive will* of God; but his *defectibility* is no *object* of creating power and *will*, for it is not *optional* in God whether a creature, in itself considered, shall be defectible, but arises from the conditional necessity of things.

But is there *any necessity of things* independent on the *mere will* of God? In reply to this question I would put another: Is it the *mere will* of God that constitutes a difference between Himself and a creature? Is not this difference founded on *hypothetical* necessity, superior to *all will,*—as truly so as God's own existence is of *absolute* necessity? Again: Is it by the *mere will* of God that He is, and continues to be *what He is?* or, that a *creature* should not be omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, &c.? Is it not sober language to say that this is *impossible?* For, *if* there be another being besides the *First Cause,* it is *necessary* he should be limited in his power, knowledge, presence, &c. And thus it is demonstrable that, without recurring to *fatalism,* there is an *hypothetical* necessity superior to all will.

Is not this making moral evil *absolutely necessary?* No; not in the least degree. For—

(1.) Created existence is not *absolutely* necessary. *If,* indeed, God exert creating wisdom and power, it is *necessary* this creature should be inferior to Himself, and the subject of many limitations. But this necessity, it is plain, is only *consequential.* Nor is it proper to say that these limitations are the objects of decretive will. For a *decree* implies, properly speaking, a power of doing otherwise antecedently; as it would be absurd that God decrees *not to make* a self-existent being, or *not to make* man independent, or indefectible, considered in himself.

(2.) The creature's defection, or sin, is not *absolutely* necessary. For God *might* have preserved *all* His rational creatures, *if* it had pleased Him, in a way of sovereign grace, in a state of integrity. But IF a rational creature be dealt with according to EQUITY, it would be equal to God himself if it did not fall; that is, the *necessity* of its falling into sin, though not *absolute,* is yet *hypothetical.* In other words, IF God give the creature what is, in strictness, its *due,* it *necessarily shews itself* to be essentially different from the holiness, independence, and indefectibility of its Maker.

May we not at length venture to say, that the ultimate or true *origin of evil,* as a *moral defect,* has been fairly *demonstrated?* The steps are easily perceived, and the connexion between them is such as exists between the subject and predicate of a true proposition; the truth of the connexion not depending upon, but superior to *all will.* IF God, for instance, create Adam, it does not depend on the Divine *will* whether he be *dependent* or not,

but he *must* be so of necessity; IF dependent, in like manner he *must* be defectible, for no creature, considered in himself, can be otherwise in virtue of any Divine *volition;* IF defectible, and left in *equity*, that is, enjoying nothing more than his real and strict *due*, it does not in the least depend on the *will* of God whether or not he become thereby the subject of *moral defect*, any more than whether two and two make four rather than five, or whether a just inference be or be not connected with its premises. Thus every creature, however exalted, stands infinitely beneath God! The height of the Divine Majesty can never be sufficiently adored! How transcendent the glories and prerogatives of the self-existent I AM, in comparison with the worm of earth, man, with angels, with a moral system, with the aggregate of all worlds! *O the depth!*

This view of the subject is well adapted to fill the thoughtful mind with reverential awe. But what transporting joy, as well as ardent love, enlarged benevolence, and sincere satisfaction may not be deduced from the other view of it! Gracious sovereignty presides over all! *God is love*, His goodness is a boundless and fathomless ocean, and His mercy endureth for ever! In reference to this great subject, above all others, are those words of our Lord truly important:—"Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." *

These views, if I am not mistaken, most exactly and unexceptionably correspond with the whole tenor and every part of Scripture. I know of neither precept nor promise, invitation nor threatening, which is not in perfect harmony with the above representations. On the contrary, the Arminian hypothesis, I think it is fairly shewn, tends to rob God of His rights of sovereignty, and fathers all the sins in the universe, though not designedly, yet eventually, on the *Author* of free-will; while the *absolute* Necessitarians, as most of the modern pretended *rational*, exclusively rational *divines* are, together with infidel speculatists, from whose pernicious opinions some Calvinists, through better motives and for different ends, have not kept quite clear,—while *such Necessitarians*, I say, who make *moral evil* of positive and voluntary appointment, as one *link* of a *decretive chain*, must either father sin upon the *decree*, or deny the existence of sin, as distinct from *natural* evil, and consequently of a *moral* system.

* Luke xviii. 14.

To this we may add, the system now advanced attributes what is *good* in all actions to God; not only the *power*, but the *natural act*, even the *natural* act of actions *morally* bad; which causation is *positive*, and every way worthy of an infinitely good and perfect being. But all moral defect, or sin, is the *obliquity* of an act naturally good; which obliquity, in every shape and respect, has only a *deficient cause*, and therefore infinitely remote from all Divine causation.

§ 22. There is no method, perhaps, more effectual, in order to estimate with impartiality the merits of any system, than that of trying it by the force of *objections* brought against it by able opposers. Indeed no system of morals or of religion is capable of such demonstration as utterly excludes all plausible objections; even the first principle of morals, the being of God, not excepted. Yet, when the strongest objections are urged with ingenuity and strength, and the fabric stands against every assault, men of integrity will be constrained to forbear the rashness of a hasty condemnation. The objections urged by Mr Fletcher, in his numerous writings against Calvinism, are very abundant; but those which he urges with the greatest confidence are such as the following:— (1.) That we confound the *different kinds* of necessity, and maintain that all actions, bad as well as good, are *absolutely* necessitated. (2.) That we do not distinguish between certainty of *knowledge* and peculiar *influence*. (3.) That Calvinistic necessity cannot exist, since the time of our *birth* and *death* is not absolutely fixed. (4.) That we *multiply* the decrees unnecessarily. (5.) That we ascribe *too absolute* a dependence upon God, in reference to adults, though not to infants. (6.) That the *connexion* between election and reprobation is *unavoidable*, and therefore shocking. (7.) That we represent God as *permitting* sin. (8.) That God *cannot necessitate free agents* without *destroying their nature*. In examining these objections, I shall state them in our author's own words, with all the impartiality in my power.

§ 23. First, It is objected that we confound the *different kinds* of necessity. Thus Mr Fletcher:—"One of the most common mistakes, in which the Calvinists found their doctrine, is confounding a *necessity of consequence* with an *absolute necessity*." To shew that Mr Fletcher himself made a proper distinction and well understood the difference, he proceeds to define and illustrate necessity of consequence:—"A necessity of consequence," says he,

"is the necessary connexion which immediate causes have with their effects, immediate effects with their causes, and unavoidable consequences with their premises. . . . . These *necessities of consequence,*" introduced for illustration, "do not amount to one grain of *Calvinian absolute necessity.*" * This representation is neither candid nor true. On the contrary, the main body, if not all of the modern Calvinists, entirely reject the latter in favour of the former. And if Mr Toplady sometimes expressed himself in an unguarded manner, so as to mislead the incautious, his *professed* object was to maintain the same kind of necessity with Mr Jonathan Edwards, in his Treatise on the Will; who, as every one acquainted with that work knows, maintained the necessity of consequence exclusively. "When," says Mr Edwards, "the subject and predicate of the proposition which affirms the existence of anything, either substance, quality, act, or circumstance, have a full and certain connexion, then the existence or being of that thing is said to be necessary in a *metaphysical* sense. And IN THIS SENSE I use the word *necessity* in the following discourse, when I endeavour to prove that necessity is not inconsistent with liberty." † Nay, this writer is, if possible, still more explicit:— "Things which are perfectly connected with other things that are necessary are necessary themselves, by a *necessity of consequence. All things which are future,* or which will hereafter begin to be, which can be said to be necessary, are necessary *only in this last way.* Their existence is not necessary *in itself;* for if so they always would have existed. And therefore *this* is the necessity which especially belongs to controversies about the acts of the will." ‡

It must, however, be acknowledged, that neither of these writers is sufficiently guarded respecting God being, *in no sense,* the author of sin. "If," says Mr Edwards, "by the *author of sin* is meant the permitter, or not a hinderer of sin; and, at the same time, a disposer of the state of events, in such a manner, for wise, holy, and most excellent ends and purposes, that sin, if it be permitted or not hindered, will most certainly and infallibly follow,— I say, if this be all that is meant by being the author of sin, I do not deny that God is the *author of sin,* though I dislike and reject the phrase, as that which by use and custom is apt to carry

* Reply to Toplady, p. 45.

† Edward's Inquiry, p. 23. ‡ Ibid., p. 25.

another sense." * To me there appears an utter *impropriety* in this mode of speaking, however guarded. If sin be a *defect* of what *ought to be*, its cause must be a *deficient* one, from which God is infinitely remote. In the present case, the word *author* must be of the same import with *cause;* but *in no sense whatever* is God the *cause* of sin. To be "a disposer of the state of events" worthy of God, is to be the cause of *good only.* The truth is, Mr Edwards was not entirely free from the false notion of the *origin of evil*—viz., that it is the result of circumstances, associations, and combinations, *without us;* whereas, in reality, these make *no part* of its origin or cause. If ever this awful subject become more truly and generally understood, it will be, I apprehend, when those who investigated it have a just and consistent notion of PASSIVE POWER, in its nature, causes, and effects.

Mr Fletcher, however, was of opinion that our divines, and Mr Edwards among others, could not even distinguish between *metaphysical* and *absolute* necessity; or, if they could, made no use of the distinction. "If the reader," says he, "is pleased to advert to this distinction between a *necessity of consequence* and *absolute necessity*, he will be able to steer safe through a thousand Calvinian rocks." † If *this* be the cause of steering safely through dangers, it should seem the Calvinists are not more exposed to the hazards and horrors of shipwreck than the Arminians.

Mr Fletcher ascribes to Calvinism another "confusion" with as little propriety as he did the former, when he says, "They perpetually confound *natural* necessity with what may (improperly speaking) be called *moral* necessity;" and then exclaims, "Now, can anything be more unreasonable than to infer that servants can no more help obeying their masters than children can help being born with two hands? Is it not absurd thus to confound *natural* and *moral* necessity?" ‡ Very absurd, no doubt; and let those who are indeed guilty of such a blunder lie under the merited imputation.

Mr Fletcher thought himself perfectly secure from such imputation; yet, perhaps, the weight of it really falls upon *his system* with greater force than upon *ours;* nay, his system is more exposed than even the *caricature* he has drawn of Calvinism. Hear him:—"That *nothing* happens *independently* on that cause, [the Supreme First Cause,] and on the providential laws which God has

* Inquiry, p. 357. † Reply to Toplady, p. 48. ‡ Ibid., p. 49.

established, we *grant*." * Here is, in the first instance, every thing *granted* that the most rigid Necessitarian pleads for. *Nothing* happens *independently* on God, and His *appointment*, which is implied in "the providential laws which God has established." Take also into the account our author's opinion, that sin is *a positive something*, which has a positive cause, and you will soon infer, without any laboured deduction, that he makes God the supreme first cause of sin. To mend the matter he adds :—"But this does not prove at all the Calvinian necessity of *all* our actions." No, not the *Calvinian necessity*, which makes *only good* actions to be caused in the manner before mentioned; but it proves *more*, it proves that our *bad* actions, as well as our good, proceed from the Supreme First Cause.

§ 24. Again :—"Confusion reigns in every part of Babel; another capital mistake of the Necessitarians consists in their confounding *prophetic* necessity, or rather prophetic certainty, with *absolute* necessity. An illustration will explain my meaning. Mr Toplady discovers a boy who is obstinately bent upon theft. From his knowledge of the force of indulged habits, he foresees and foretells that the boy one day will come to the gallows; and his prediction is fulfilled." The question is then put concerning the boy, "Might he not have reformed, and died in his bed?" † Undoubtedly he might, for aught that God did to hinder him. But on prophetic certainty, in addition to what was said before on the subject, and on the case introduced for illustration, I would remark—

(1.) *Prophetic certainty* is an *unerring* declared foresight of some future *event;* and the *certainty* of that *event* must be in exact proportion to the certainty of the *knowledge* and *veracity* of the prophet. Therefore—

(2.) The question, "Might he not have reformed," &c., is the same as to say, Might not the prophet be either *ignorant* or *false?* If so, why should anything he says be called "prophetic certainty?" Rather should it not be called a blind conjecture, or deliberate falsehood? But—

(3.) If the event be prophetically *certain*, then there is a certain connexion between the subject and the predicate of the proposition affirming it; or the event follows with the same degree of certainty as the connexion of the parts of the proposition. If the event *might* be otherwise than what the prediction asserts, the

* Reply to Toplady, p. 49. † Ibid., p. 50.

connexion between the parts of the proportion *might* be *false*. And such prophecies, I should think, would be more properly denominated *uncertain prophecies*, or *prophetic uncertainty*.

Mr Fletcher asserts, "The necessity of fulfilling the Scripture, with respect to our Lord, could never amount to the least degree of *absolute* Calvinian necessity."* The necessity of Calvinists is, not what Mr Fletcher is pleased to say of it, but a *necessity of consequence*. And we argue, IF Christianity, and redemption by the death of Christ, be a part of a grand scheme to be accomplished, it was *necessary* He should die the just for the unjust. This is the necessity we contend for; but thus explained, that the *sinfulness* of men was not *caused*, but only *foreseen*, while the *benefits* attending His death were *both* foreseen and caused.

Moreover:—"When we meet with such sayings as these," says Mr Fletcher, "'This that is written *must* be accomplished in me,' 'The Scriptures *must* be fulfilled,' &c., if they relate to Christ, they only indicate a *necessity of* RESOLUTION, if I may use this expression. Now, a necessity of resolution is the very reverse of *absolute* necessity."† *Quere:* Was this *resolution* anything different from the *purpose* of God-man? And was the latter anything different from an expression of the Divine *decree?* It is true, God was under no *antecedent* necessity to form *any* resolution, purpose, or decree; but when the resolution was made, that the Saviour, for instance, would die for sinners, was not the *connexion* between the resolution made and its accomplishment *certain*, INFALLIBLY certain? Or is there any medium between *certain* and *uncertain?* Was not the proposition, *Jesus will die for sinners*, true, and therefore certain, from eternity? The *necessity* was *hypothetical*, because it originally depended upon WILL, and a great number of facts and circumstances in time were *conditionally supposed*, but the *certainty* admitted of no degrees or exceptions. This is *all* we contend for, with respect to those things which it is unworthy of God efficiently to cause.

§ 25. Secondly, We are again charged with confounding certainty of *knowledge* with peculiar *influence*. "All the difficulties," says Mr Fletcher, "which the Calvinists have raised, with respect to the consistency of Divine *foreknowledge* and human *free-will*, arise from two mistakes: the first of which consists in supposing that the simple, certain knowledge of an event, whether past, pre-

* Reply to Toplady, p. 51. † Ibid., pp. 51, 52.

sent, or future, is necessarily connected with a peculiar influence on that event; and the second consists in measuring God's *foreknowledge* by our own, and supposing that because we cannot prophesy with *absolute* certainty what free-willing creatures will do to-morrow, therefore God cannot do it." *

I am not disposed to admit either of these charges as founded in justice towards Calvinists, notwithstanding the quotation produced from Toplady, and the confident assertion which follows it. "I have dwelt the longer upon this head," says Mr Fletcher, "because it is the stronghold of the Calvinists, from which Mr Toplady seems to bid defiance to every argument, witness his assertion: FOREKNOWLEDGE, *undarkened by the least shadow of* IGNORANCE, *and superior to all possibility of* MISTAKE, *is a link which draws* INVINCIBLE NECESSITY *after it.*" In opposition to this, Mr Fletcher asserts:—"So sure as the Bible is true, Mr Toplady is mistaken;" and then refers to 1 Sam. xxiii. 10–12, where the Lord says concerning Saul, "He will come down;" and of the men of Keilah, "They will deliver thee up:" neither of which took place. From the whole he concludes:—"So far was his clear foreknowledge, and peremptory prophecy of God, from drawing *invincible necessity* after them, that Saul did not come to Keilah; neither did the men of Keilah deliver David into his hands." †

Had Mr Fletcher called in candour to his aid, to determine Mr Toplady's real meaning under the controverted terms, the difficulty raised would have had no existence. By *foreknowledge* Mr Toplady evidently meant one thing, and Mr Fletcher another. The former intended by it that *prescience* which includes the *certain futurition* of an *event;* the latter intended, as appears from his illustration, that *science* which regards only the *hypothetical tendencies* of things; and which tendencies may be overruled by other superinduced causes. Besides, is not *hypothetical necessity invincible,* inasmuch as IF a proposition be true, the subject and predicate of it are *invincibly* connected; IF the premises of a syllogism be true, the consequence *invincibly* follows: no possible opposition can prevent the connexion of the one, or consequence of the other.

But supposing Mr Toplady had also included the idea of a

* Reply, p. 54. † Ibid., p. 55.

"peculiar influence" on an event, it does not follow that this influence proceeds from, or is exerted by foreknowledge. We say that *all good* in the universe is done *efficiently* by Jehovah, and therefore that He *resolved* or *decreed* to do it; for will any one say, that He does in time what He did *not intend* to do before time? We say also, that *no evil* in the universe is *effected* by Him, and therefore no evil was ever intended to be effected by Him; for this would be making Him like ourselves in the worst sense. Yet, from our absolute dependence on God, and the consequent defectibility of a dependent nature, the evil we do may be as clearly and certainly foreseen by the all-comprehending mind as any two quantities, one positive, and the other negative, and the sum of their difference.

§ 26. One might be led to think from Mr Fletcher's objections to Calvinism, on account of the difficulties he is pleased to attach to it, that while our side is dark and perplexed, his own was bright with superior evidence. But how does he clear the difficulty? "Future contingent events," says he, "are clearly seen of God; this foresight of God has not the least influence on such events; God can foretell such events as contingent."* Now, reader, is the difficulty removed, or the cause of it in the least degree pointed out?

"Future contingent events." Are there any events, then, contingent to *God?* Or are they contingent only in reference to *our* want of comprehension? If an event proceeding from free agency be contingent to Him, the proposition which prophetically declares an event *certainly future* is yet itself an *uncertain proposition.* If the idea of contingency refer to us, whose comprehension is limited, who ever denied that God foreknows as certain what we do not?

"The foresight of God has no influence on events." But He is the *Supreme First Cause* of all things, and His providence is regulated by laws of His own appointment. If, therefore, His *foresight* has no influence, His supreme causation of all entities, and His plan of providence, must have *great* influence. Nay, if Mr Fletcher's notion of sin, that it is *something positive*, be supposed, we must also suppose that sin is as much caused by the Creator as holiness. Of what use is it, therefore, to contend that

* Reply, p. 55.

mere foreknowledge does not influence? And what becomes of the two great *axioms*—that all good is from God, and all evil from ourselves?

Is there the same difficulty on our side? No. For, while God appoints and effects the good, He only foresees the evil, which free agents will perpetrate without His causing it; for He sees, with infinite precision, all hypothetical tendencies, *passive* as well as active. And, while treating on this subject, it is a remark we should never forget, that there is *no action* of a free agent but has *something* in it worthy of God,—that is, the *natural* or physical part which is the result of general laws and providential agency on the part of God, and concurrence on the part of man,—and *so far*, but no further, is God the *cause* of it. The defect or obliquity of the act is the free agent's *exclusively*. Hence also appears, in part, the futility of the following objection.

§ 27. Thirdly, "God could never," says Mr Fletcher, "Calvinistically appoint the BIRTH of *all* children, without Calvinistically appointing their conception, and every means conducing thereto."* The charge runs yet higher:—"If Calvinism is true, He *absolutely appointed*, yea, necessitated, all the adulteries and whoredoms, with all the criminal intrigues and sinful lusts of the flesh, which are inseparably connected with the birth of base children. Now this doctrine makes God the author of all those crimes, and represents Him as the most inconsistent of all lawgivers; since by His moral decrees He forbids, and by His Calvinian decrees He enjoins, whoredom and adultery, in order to fabricate the link of the birth of every bastard child."†

Were these charges well founded, I should think it necessary without delay to change my principles. But were any one to tell me, as an advocate for the Calvinistic necessity explained in this book, that my system involves these consequences, it would be sufficient, as the reverse is so palpably evident, to refer him to Exod. xx. 16, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Both parties abhor what is here ascribed to Calvinism, and from the remark made at the close of the preceding section, it appears that the objection is irrelevant to the author's purpose.

But it unfortunately happens that the same apology, or any sufficient one, can not be made on the other side. For as, according to Mr Fletcher, every sin is a positive thing, and "nothing

* Reply, p. 57. † Ut supra.

happens independently on the Supreme First Cause, and on the providential laws which God has established," it follows, that the consequence which was falsely ascribed to Calvinism is truly applicable to Arminianism; and that the *birth* of a child, which is the result of "the providential laws which God has established," of every child, nay, of every human action, the defect and obliquity thereof not excepted, is no less *fixed* than the day of judgment.

Not content with denying to God the right of appointing the *birth* of all children, since some of them are illegitimate, others vow celibacy, and some prevent, by carelessness or cruelty, "the maturity of the fruit of the womb;" Mr Fletcher contends, by similar arguments, that our *death* is not so at God's disposal as to fix the period of it, at least in general. His words are:—"God does not so fabricate the link of our death, but we may, *in general*, prolong our days by choosing wisdom, and shorten them by choosing folly." * He then quotes a number of passages from Scripture to prove it; passages that speak of *length of days* as the reward of wisdom, and *long life* the effect of piety. This is but one instance, out of a great number, of this kind of argumentation, which is advanced by our author on every turn. By shewing therefore the inconclusiveness of this argument, and therein of the principle on which it is built, the logical imbecility of all such instances will appear. Observe then—

(1.) When it is said we may, in general, *prolong our days*, by choosing wisdom, what is the determinate meaning of the phrase in the Arminian argument? Can it intend anything more than, it is matter of *fact* as well as of *promise*, that godliness (*cæt. par.*) is connected with longevity? And if so, is it not one of the *laws* of heaven, and therefore an *appointed* prolongation?

(2.) If folly *shortens* our days, (*cæt. par.*,) is not this also a *law* equitably *appointed?* In fact, the early death of the sinner, as well as the late death of the righteous, is as much and unexceptionably subjected to *law* and *appointment* as the death of any other persons in the world. To assert the contrary would be as destitute of truth as it would be to say that the Supreme Governor has but *one mode* of accomplishing His purposes, or that there is but *one way* of living and dying among men.

(3.) If *every* birth and death is alike *prophetically certain*,—that is, perfectly and infallibly known to God, so that, if He thought

* Reply, p. 59.

proper, He might declare it as an event *certainly* future, with all its most minute circumstances,—it follows that *every* birth and death is *hypothetically necessary*. But let no one be so uncandid as to ascribe to us, on this account, a *fatal, absolute* necessity; which impious sentiment we abhor no less than the objector. Besides—

(4.) If *one*, by free-will, may prolong or shorten life in a *great* degree, what adult is there that does not either prolong or shorten life in *some* degree? Consequently, if Mr Fletcher's principle be admitted, *every* life and death of an adult may be a deviation from the standard of heaven. But what is that standard? Is it the laws of Providence? What are these laws of Providence? Do they not include the *minds* of men, as well as their bodies? Or are they barely the mechanism of matter and motion? If the latter, what a mutilated meagre notion of Providence! A Providence this, concerned in *matter* only, to the exclusion of men's minds! It should seem, then, that angels and devils are not the subjects of Providence!

But "it is the property of error to contradict itself." Mr Fletcher acknowledges that "the birth and death of *all* mankind take place according to *some* providential laws."* Now, are there any providential laws which are not of *Divine appointment?* And are not the more secret and minute wheels, the furthest removed from the grasp and ken of creatures, as well as the largest and most prominent, in the stupendous machine of Providence, equally *appointed?*

Mr Fletcher justly observes that "God in a *peculiar* manner interposes in the *execution* or *suspension* of these laws, with respect to the *birth* of some men," and "He does the same with respect to the untimely *death* of some, and the wonderful *preservation* of others." To make this account answer our objector's purpose, we must absurdly imagine that *particular* interpositions are no part of the *plan and purpose* of God respecting His creatures!

He still objects:—"To carry the doctrine of Providence so far as to make God *absolutely* appoint the birth and death of all mankind with all their circumstances, is to exculpate adulterers and murderers, and to charge God with being the principal contriver, and grand abettor, of all the atrocious crimes, and of all the filthy, bloody circumstances, which have accompanied the birth and death

* Reply, p. 61.

of countless myriads of men."* Mr Fletcher seems to forget, "that nothing happens independently on the Supreme First Cause, and on the providential laws which God has established."† Could these *atrocious crimes*, though their *atrocity* was not *caused* by God and His laws, have ever existed as *concrete acts, independently* on either?

It is once more urged :—"Should Mr Toplady answer, that, although the generation and death of a child conceived in adultery, and cut off by murder, is *divinely and unchangeably fixed*, yet God is not at all the author of the adultery and murder; I desire to know how we can cut the Gordian knot, and divide between"‡ the *crime* and the *act?* Mr Fletcher's requisition is by no means a difficult task; it has been very often executed; nay, he himself, Alexander-like, has done it. What he could not *untie* he arbitrarily *cut!* It is hoped that the sentiments maintained in this Essay, already explained, concerning the nature and origin of moral evil, contain a fair *solution* of the question.

In short, to suppose that there is *any action* or *event* in the world which has not *something* good in it, and to make anything besides the *positive will* of God to be the *cause* of everything *good* in the life, and death, and circumstances of *every* person, is to charge Providence with endless and consummate folly. In other words, it is to *overturn* the two gospel *axioms*.

From these premises we see the futility of Mr Fletcher's inference, "If neither the *first* nor the *last* link of the chain of human life is, *in general*, fabricated by the *absolute will* of God, it is unreasonable to suppose that the free-will of Deity alone fabricates the intermediate links." Why not, *so far as they are good?* And until *sinless* perfection can be better proved to have present *actual existence* in our world than it has yet been, we may well ask, What acts of the *best* of men and women are free of ALL moral defect? The *difference*, then, of the Divine causation and concurrence in the actions of the *best* and *worst* of men, and, I may add, the actions of angels and devils, is this: the former are the effects of much sovereign favour, the latter of much equitable dereliction. The one has much of what it could not in equity claim; the other has much of what was its *due*—viz., being *left to itself* in the morality of its act.

§ 28. Fourthly, Another objection urged by Mr Fletcher against

* Reply, p. 61. † Ibid., p. 49. ‡ Ibid., p. 61.

the Calvinists is, that they *multiply* the decrees without cause. Bishop Hopkins had said, that "not a dust flies on a beaten road but God raiseth it, conducts its uncertain motion, and by His particular care conveys it to the particular place He had before appointed for it." To this representation Mr Fletcher objects, "because it absurdly *multiplies* God's decrees: at this rate a large folio volume could not contain all the decrees of God concerning the least particle of dust."* It is not to be wondered at that one who denies God the appointment of the births and the deaths of men, should also plead exemption for their moral actions, from a notion, well meant, indeed, though unfounded, that it implies what is unworthy of the Great Supreme, His moral perfections and government. But it might puzzle a Jesuitic host to guess what good end can be answered by excluding a small portion of matter from the influence of Divine purpose. Is the Divine mind subject to the same *inconvenience* with ours by a *multiplicity* of objects? Perhaps no one has confidence enough to affirm there are not as many *worlds* in the immensity of space as there are *words* in a thousand volumes, or particles of flying dust on our globe. Or if we reject the expanded ideas of astronomers respecting a plurality of worlds, must the *multiplicity* of the objects, and thence a tacit fear lest they should be any way distracting to the Divine mind, or fatiguing to the Divine power, be the reason of that rejection? Rather is it not one of the greatest glories of Jehovah, that He perceives with *infinite ease* all possible worlds, and all possible multiplicities and varieties of such worlds? And does not reason dictate, that He could with equal ease *decree* what He pleased of those possibles? Consequently, with what ease could He perceive and decree all atoms and accidents in "this little dwelling-place of worms."

Besides, is not what the apostle says of *men* applicable to every living creature, "In Him we live and move?" And is it not equally true, that in Him every particle of dust, every ray of light, "has its being?" To suppose, therefore, that God decrees things *in general*, as Mr Fletcher often intimates, but not *in particular*, on account of the *multitude* of objects, and of accidents to which they are liable, is a sort of compliment to the Divine mind which is highly affronting, as if He were "altogether such a one as ourselves," or at most an augmentation only of what is

* Reply, p. 27.

finite. Let any person who has just notions of an INFINITE MIND judge of the following questions for himself. Is it *more difficult* for God to create a thousand worlds than one? to determine the movements of the solar system than our little globe? to appoint the general laws of nature, than the execution of those laws in their *minutiæ?* to ascertain the production, the progress, refractions, reflections, and absorptions of all the rays of light existing in the whole duration of time, than if *one only* were the object of His attention? If, indeed, we judge of Divine perfections as *limited*, we answer in the affirmative, and say, that every additional object requires additional power, wisdom, attention, &c. But if we judge of the great I AM in a manner worthy of Himself, we shall say, that *all difficulty*, which does not imply a real contradiction, is infinitely removed from Him. It cannot be more difficult, distracting, perplexing, or any way unworthy of God, to pay a minute individual attention to millions of millions of *animalculæ*, grains of sand, or drops of water, and ascertain every motion and accident relative to each, than it would be to make a single monarch His only care.

§ 29. Fifthly, Mr Fletcher objects that we ascribe *too absolute* a dependence upon God to accountable beings. Mr Toplady had objected to the Arminian notion of a *self-determining power*, because it implied a degree of *independence* unsuitable to a creature. To this Mr Fletcher returns such an answer, containing such a representation of the dependence of a creature on God, as nothing but the desperation of a cause would suggest. "Is a horse independent on its master, because it can *determine itself* to range or lie down in his pasture? Is a captain *independent* on his general, because he can *determine himself* to stand his ground, or to run away in an engagement? Are subjects *independent* on their sovereign, because they can *determine themselves* to break or keep the laws of the land?"* Does this notion of our dependence on our Maker, Preserver, and Governor, bear any resemblance or consistency with the apostle's account of the same subject? "In God we [not the good only, but *all* promiscuously, *we*] live, move, and have our being." What are laws of nature without effectuosity? or organised bodies and mind, without the immediate concurring energy of the First Cause?

Yet Mr Fletcher allows, not only that "all free agents have

* Reply, p. 69.

received their life and free agency from God," but also that they "are every moment *dependent* upon God, for the preservation of their life and free agency."* But the question is, Whether these free agents are independent on God *in their free agency?* Whether any being in earth, or heaven, or hell, is independent on God in his *acts,* in any individual act? The affirmative, we say, is irreconcilable with all just views of creaturely dependence, or the essential difference between a creature and the Creator. What though Mr Fletcher's horse, captain, or subject, in the illustration above quoted, be *dependent,* in *some respects,* on the master, the general, and the sovereign, are there not a thousand respects in which they are independent on them? How can this, therefore, be applicable to God and the creature without danger of irreverent rashness?

Unembarrassed with the shackles of a *difficult cause* Mr Fletcher had undertaken to serve, how different from the sentiment now opposed is the tendency of the following language, which, in justice to the author's piety, deserves notice in this place:—"All our *life, light,* and *power,* are nothing but emanations from Him who is the fountain of life, the sun of righteousness, the wisdom and power of God—Jehovah our righteousness. All that *gracious rewardableness* of the works of faith, all that *aptitude* of our sprinkled obedience unto eternal life, all that *being worthy,* which He himself condescends to speak of, Rev. iii. 4, and Luke xx. 35, spring not only *from His gracious appointment,* but from His overflowing merits. *What have we,* great God, *that we have not received* from Thy gracious hand? and shall we keep back part of Thy incontestable property, and impiously wear Thy robes of praise! Far be the spiritual sacrilege from every pious breast! In point of *strict equivalence,* our best works of faith, our holiest duties, cannot merit the least reward. But—oh, may the humbling truth keep us for ever in the dust!—in point of *strict justice,* our every bad work *properly* deserves infernal torments. Are our hearts softened? It is through the influence of His preventing grace. Are our sins blotted out? It is through the sprinkling of His atoning blood. The very graces which the Spirit *works in us,* and the fruits of holiness which those graces *produce* in our hearts and lives, are acceptable only for Christ's sake. All Christian believers say, *Not we,* but the grace of God in Christ. So far as

* Reply, p. 69.

their *tempers* and *actions* have been *good*, they cry out, *Thou* hast wrought all our works in us. If ever we did one truly good work, the merit is not ours, but God's, who by His free grace *prevented*, *accompanied*, and *followed* us in the performance. For it is 'God,' who 'of His good pleasure worketh in us both to will and to do,' (Phil. ii. 12.) 'Not I,' says the apostle, 'but the grace of God in me.'"* This is language worthy of a Christian divine; what a pity it should ever be contradicted!

§ 30. Sixthly, Mr Fletcher, like Dr Whitby, takes it for granted, from some unguarded expressions of Calvinists, that if decretive *election* be true, decretive *reprobation* must be so too. This representation of the case is industriously propagated by Modern Arminians, which is an additional call for animadversion upon it. Thus Mr Fletcher asserts:—"Absolute Calvinian election *unavoidably drags after it* absolute Calvinian reprobation;—a black *reprobation* this, which *necessitates* all who are personally written in the book of death to sin on, and be damned."† This assertion is as unfounded in *truth* as it is void of decent candour, and which we not only disavow, but also *demonstrate to be impossible. Absolute election* implies a *positive appointment*, which we have proved before to be worthy of God, and a glorious fact; but *reprobation*, in Mr Fletcher's acceptation of the term, being an *appointment* of sin as the means, and of misery as the end, has been also proved to be equally inconsistent with the nature of *sin* as a moral defect, of *God* as a being of infinite holiness and justice, and of *man* as a free agent.

In reference to this subject, Mr Fletcher makes a very curious proposal:—"If any Calvinist in the world can prove that, *upon the Calvinian plan*, among the thousands of Calvin's reprobates who are yet in their mother's womb, *one* of them can, any how, avoid final damnation, I solemnly engage myself, before the public, to get my 'Checks' burnt at Charing Cross by the common hangman, on any day which Mr Hill, Mr Toplady, and Mr M'Gowan will please to appoint."‡ This passage, in one view of it, is worded in so cautious a manner, that *now* it is become impossible for the boys at Charing Cross to have a bonfire of the

* Fletcher's Discourse on Salvation by the Covenant of Grace, in "Equal Check," p. 44, &c.

† Answer to Toplady's Vindication of the Decrees, p. 9, note.

‡ Ibid., p. 11.

"Checks;" but in another view, had the parties concerned claimed the diverting engagement, they might, for the requisition was not so hard a task as he thought, except he meant to insult his readers by requiring contradictions.

Mr Fletcher himself would allow that *eventually*, or *in fact*, such and such *individuals* of the human race will be in heaven and in hell. Now, "on the Calvinian plan," the *reprobates* are the latter; and their misery is *of themselves* so *entirely* as if there were neither decree nor even foreknowledge in God. What more could Mr Fletcher say or wish on the subject? This cannot be said of the *others*, for their happiness, being a real good, is of *God*. But should any one say, What Mr Fletcher required was an acknowledgment that one of those who in *fact* will be miserable *might* have been "by some means" brought in fact to heaven; if the meaning be that the reprobates, as the objector calls them, should have suitable and sufficient *means* to avoid misery, or *can*, notwithstanding any supposed decree of reprobation to the contrary, which is all in reason that can be required to constitute obligation in moral agents; I hesitate not to say, the proposal is accepted: a Calvinist can prove, and has proved in this volume, what Mr Fletcher required, and to which he annexed his extraordinary engagement.—But now, reader, out of the four persons concerned in the proposal, including the author of the "Checks to Antinomianism," three are gone to heaven, where they are better employed than in mutual recriminations and jarrings by the way thither.

Mr Toplady had argued, "If it can be proved that God *owes* salvation to every rational being He has made; *then*, and then only, will it follow, that God is *unjust* in not paying His debt of salvation to each. What shadow of injustice can be fastened on His conduct for, in some cases, withholding what He does not owe?"* How does Mr Fletcher answer it? Why, by granting to the present writer all he wishes in order to establish the equity of Divine government, and the sovereignty of Divine grace. "The flaw of it," says Mr Fletcher, "consists in supposing that there can be no MEDIUM between *denying* eternal salvation, and *appointing* to eternal damnation; and that, because God may *absolutely elect* as many of His creatures as He pleases to a crown of glory, He may *absolutely reprobate* as many as Calvinism pleases to eternal

* Toplady's More Work for Mr John Wesley, pp. 35, 36.

sin and everlasting burnings." * Here Mr Fletcher supposes a *medium* between *denying* salvation and positively *reprobating;* but at the same time that Calvinism knows no such medium. In the present attempt, however, a Calvinist not only acknowledges the existence of such a medium, but has undertaken to point out, and from first principles to establish, the indispensable necessity of it in the true system of theology; but which Mr Fletcher neither did, nor, on his own principles, could do.

But after acknowledging the necessity and existence of such a *medium,* what can Mr Fletcher mean by such representations as the following?—"It is a common *stratagem* of the Calvinists to say, Election depends upon God's love only, but *damnation* depends upon our sin only. Break the thin shell of this sophism, and you will find this bitter kernel: God's distinguishing love elects some to unavoidable holiness and finished salvation; and His distinguishing wrath reprobates all the rest of mankind to remediless sin and eternal damnation." † It is natural to ask, whether Mr Fletcher would have a Calvinist say,—who as cordially abhors what is here palmed upon him as he himself ever did,—he could wish him to say, "The *sole cause* of the *reprobation* which ends in unavoidable damnation is only sin." For one, this I can most cordially say, as what appears to me a sacred truth; but without giving up Calvinism, because *it does not* "stand or fall with *absolute* reprobation," notwithstanding Mr Fletcher's repeated assertions to the contrary. When opposing the doctrine of *absolute* election to eternal life, he adds:—"An election this, which, *in the very nature of things,* drags after it an *absolute* reprobation to eternal death, through remediless sin." Surely, when the author of the above paragraph penned it, he must have had a very confined notion of the "nature of things."

§ 31. The Rev. R. Hill had said, in his "Friendly Remarks," that "salvation wholly depends upon the purpose of God according to election, without any respect to what may be in the elect." In open defiance to his own supposed *medium,* as well as of sacred truth, Mr Fletcher thus replies:—"Now, sir, as by the doctrine of *undeniable consequences,* he who receives a guinea with the *king's head* on the one side cannot but receive the *lion's* on the other side; so he that admits the preceding proposition *cannot but admit* the *inseparable counterpart*—namely, the following position, which

* Answer to Toplady's Vindication of the Decrees, p. 33. † Ibid., p. 11.

every attentive and unprejudiced person sees written in blood upon that side of Calvin's standard which is generally kept out of sight, 'Damnation wholly depends upon the purpose of God according to reprobation, without respect to what may be in the reprobates.'" * A single remark sufficiently exposes this fanciful consequence. As there *is not* in fact any meritorious good, or even *distinguished excellence* of any kind, in the finally happy, but what was *gratuitously* received, their salvation must *wholly* depend on the purpose and choice of God; which Mr Fletcher himself has often acknowledged in a manner more or less explicit. But, on the reverse, as there *is*, in fact, a *sufficient demerit* in the finally miserable, without any purpose, will, or agency of God whatever, their damnation is of *themselves alone*, totally irrespective of all reprobation.

In various ways, and by unwearied efforts, Mr Fletcher has endeavoured to fasten this horrible consequence upon Calvinism. "The question is not," he remarks, "whether God can justly limitate the *happiness* of man, or the number of the men whom He will raise to such and such heights. This we never disputed." Wherein, then, does this differ from true Calvinism? In nothing. Mr Fletcher having observed some unguarded expressions in Mr Toplady and some others, called them Calvinism, and inferred from thence that all Calvinists hold, what in fact they abhor—namely, that God "may also *without injustice absolutely reprobate* as many of His unborn creatures as He pleases, and *decree* to protract their infernal torment to all eternity, after having first *decreed* their necessary fall into sin, and their necessary continuance in sin, as necessary means in order to their necessary end, which is eternal damnation." † After such a monstrous exhibition as this, who can wonder that Mr Fletcher's partial admirers should be frightened at the very name of a Calvinist, and view him as a deluded Manichean!

What could we think of a man who should detain two persons of the *same name*, one guilty and the other innocent, then clothe both *alike* with bear-skins, and endanger their being alike worried? By the name Calvinism, notwithstanding the pleas, the arguments, the protestations of numbers to the contrary, Mr Fletcher often intends everything abominable and horrible, something worse and

* Logica Genevensis, pp. 144, 145.

† Answer to Toplady's Vindication, p. 34.

more frightful than Manicheism. Is this controversial fairness? Is it Christian candour? However, let us call in charity's lovely aid, and impute the exceptionable touches not to design, but to prejudice or inattention.

Mr Toplady had rashly said:—"The predestination of some to life, asserted in the *seventeenth Article*, cannot be maintained without admitting the reprobation of some others to death; and all who have subscribed to the said Article are bound in honour, conscience, and law, to defend reprobation, were it only to keep the seventeenth Article *upon its legs*." *If* Mr Toplady meant by "reprobation" a *positive appointment* to sin and wrath, I repeat the term used before—it was *rashly* asserted. For the doctrine of the seventeenth Article, which, in the plain, unsophisticated sense of it, expresses genuine Calvinism, is a column of burnished gold, placed on an eternal rock, and needs not a leg of human artifice to support it.

§ 32. It is truly shocking to observe in what an unqualified manner Mr Fletcher attributes the most horrid sentiments to Calvinism. Mr Toplady had said, with great truth, "If God be not obliged, in justice, to save mankind, then neither is He unjust in *passing by* some men;" on which our author exclaims, "If by *passing* some men by, this gentleman means, as Calvinism DOES, absolutely *predestinating* some men to necessary, *remediless sin*, and unavoidable eternal damnation; we deny that God might *justly* have passed by the whole of mankind; we deny that He might justly have passed by *one* single man, woman, or child. Nay, we affirm, that, if we conceive Satan, or the evil principle of *Manes*, as exerting creative power, we could not conceive him worse employed than in forming an *absolute* reprobate in embryo,—that is, a creature unconditionally and absolutely doomed to remediless wickedness and everlasting fire."* And so does the writer of these pages; but should so monstrous a *supposition* be laid to the account of Calvinism? Nay, rather why should so daring an *assertion* be made respecting what Calvinism *does mean* by the phrase "*passing by?*" Is it to be wondered at that an admirer of Mr Fletcher's controversial talents, who has not strength of mind to distinguish, or candidness of temper to acknowledge a difference between what is essential to Calvinism, and what is here imputed to it, should draw the inference that *all* Calvinism has in it some-

* Answer to Toplady's Vindication, p. 40.

thing supremely Satanic and Manichean? Nay, if the reader were conscious of any efforts of candour in his heart, they are instantly suppressed :—"The simple are frequently imposed upon by an artificial substituting of the *harmless* word '*passing by*' for the *terrible* word *absolutely reprobating* to death."* So then, whenever a Calvinist uses the "harmless" word, he is guilty of "artifice;" he not only *may sometimes* mean what is "terrible" by it, but this *being* (no doubt by *necessity*) the acceptation of the phrase in the Calvinian sense, he *must* be so understood. The present writer, however,—and a great majority, if not all the Calvinists, will, he presumes, therein justify him,—denies the charge, and abhors the imputation.

Calvin, it is true, in the warmth of his opposition to Popery, said some things on the subject, which, if we interpret them without either charity to the person or candour to his cause, according to the most exceptionable and harsh acceptation of the terms employed, ought to be rejected. But, that amiable grace charity, which hopeth the best of all men professing godliness, might say much in exculpation of him. When, for instance, he says, "Itaque prout in alterutrum finem *quisque* conditus est, ita vel ad vitam vel ad mortem *prædestinatum* dicimus;" this, if taken in the worst sense, might be dressed up, as Mr Fletcher does the whole body of Calvinism, in the most frightful colours; but candour will wait for Calvin's own explanation of his meaning :—"Hanc vero Deus non modo in singulis personis testatus est, sed *specimen ejus* in tota Abrahæ sobole edidit. — Ante omnium oculos est *segregatio:* in Abrahæ persona, quasi in arido trunco, populos unus, *aliis rejectis*, peculiariter eligitur."† After all the attention to the subject in my power, as contained in Calvin's Works, what he here expresses I take to be the *real doctrine* of that illustrious writer, stripped of obnoxious incidental expressions, and interpreted by Christian charity.

Nay, suppose the terms employed by Calvin, Toplady, or any other, were taken in the worst sense that an Arminian chooses to put upon them, the *source* of the mistake, or obscurity, would be the *very same* as that of Mr Fletcher's intemperate zeal against his opponents—viz., that predestination to LIFE *must needs imply* predestination to DEATH, "as he who takes the *king's head* must also take the *lion's*." Take away this false principle, and Calvin's

* Answer to Toplady's Vindication, p. 40. † Calv. Inst., lib. iii., cap. 21.

predestination, "ad vitam vel ad mortem," is the most innocent and amiable thing in the world. Nor let any one absurdly urge that the good man took *pleasure* in the thought of human *misery* for its *own* sake. To be satisfied of the falsity of the principle itself, whether held by Calvin, Fletcher, or any other, we should ever keep in mind the *absolute impossibility* of SIN being, in any respect, *decretively necessitated*, as before shewn, without involving the most absurd contradictions; while *holiness must*, in *every* respect and degree, be positively, voluntarily, and therefore decretively caused. Whoever *consistently* holds that all good is from God, and all evil from ourselves, which is the essence of all religion and morality, must also discard the illegitimate inference, the ideal fiction, that sin is positively ordained.

§ 33. Seventhly, It is again objected by Mr Fletcher that the Calvinists represent God as *permitting* sin. In nothing does our author seem more at a loss than in attempting to answer the following question:—"How came moral evil to be *permitted*, when it might as easily have been *hindered*, by a Being of infinite goodness, power, and wisdom?" In this question, the term "permitted" stands evidently opposed to "hindered," and is therefore the same as *not hindered*. But how does Mr Fletcher answer the question? By a childish *pun:* that God, "far from *permitting* man to sin, strictly *forbade* him to do it!" And by a ruinous *illustration*, taken from a general and his soldiers:—"A general wants to try the faithfulness of his soldiers, that he may reward those who *will* fight, and punish those who *will* go over to the enemy. By his omniscience he sees that some WILL desert; by his omnipotence he *would* indeed hinder them from doing it; but his infinite wisdom does not permit him to do it." And by an illiberal *inference*:—"By such dangerous insinuations as that which this illustration exposes, the simple are imperceptibly led to confound *Christ* and *Belial;* and to think that there is *little difference* between the celestial Parent of *good* and the Manichean parent of *good* and *evil;* the *Janus* of the fatalists, who wears two faces, an angel's face and a devil's face; a mongrel imaginary God this, whose fancied ways are, like his fancied nature, full of *duplicity*."*

Now, passing by the pun and the inference, to notice the illustration, the reader should be reminded, that on Mr Fletcher's principle that represents sin as the offspring of a positive cause,—*i.e.*,

* Answer to Toplady's Vindication, p. 45.

free-will, which also is the offspring of the *Divine will*,—here is not only the *not hindering* of sin, but a positive Divine causation ascribed to it; the very thing the objection professes to avoid. Besides, Mr Fletcher's illustration is as imperfect in another respect as the system he defends. Man's *dependence* upon God is of a nature *essentially* different from that of soldiers on their general. In God all His creatures *live* and *move;* and without His will and concurrence no act could possibly take place. Omniscience sees man *will sin;* the will is given by the Creator and Governor to man, and the Divine *concurrence* is added to his volition. So that by this illustration Mr Fletcher refers the *origin of evil* to the *will of God* as much as the grossest fatalism can do.

To his illustration Mr Fletcher adds an *argument*, tending to prove "that *this* world was the most perfect which God *could* create, to display His infinite power and manifold wisdom."* At length we are brought, it should seem, to a conclusion which is not a little humbling to the cavils of Arminianism : God *could not hinder* sin, but by suppressing, or not sufficiently displaying, His infinite power and manifold wisdom. The unavoidable conclusion is, on Mr Fletcher's principle respecting the nature and causation of sin, that God is *positively* the willer of the existence of this monster, in order "to display His infinite power and manifold wisdom!" A sentiment this—and which, I appeal to every candid and intelligent reader, is fairly drawn from Mr Fletcher's premises —utterly unworthy of the Divine *equity* and *rectitude*.

§ 34. Eighthly, We are again told, that to necessitate free agents is to *destroy their nature*. Thus Mr Fletcher interrogates and replies :—"But *could* not God NECESSITATE FREE AGENTS to keep the law they are under? Yes, says Calvinism; but Scripture, good sense, and matter of fact, say No."† This, it must be acknowledged, is a bold assertion; and, it should seem, more bold than true. It is contrary to Scripture, to reason, and common sense, to suppose that the spirits of just men made *perfect* lose their *free* agency. And yet, who does not admit that they are *necessitated* to keep the law they are under? On this passage I would remark :—

(1.) Mr Fletcher has expressly acknowledged a *necessity of consequence*, and *prophetic certainty*. Now, if such necessity be allowable in any case, it must be in the *influencing* of rational

* Answer to Toplady's Vindication, p. 45. † Ut supra.

beings in such a manner as that their present holiness and consequent happiness may be truly predicated of as certainly future.

(2.) We acknowledge that absolute decretive necessity to sin is incompatible with free agency and accountableness; but not so the necessity for which we plead, as appears from the following considerations:—

God sees to the end of *all* events, as *facts* truly and certainly future; this is granted. Every event must have *some* cause of its existence, which every rational mind must admit. No *sinful* event, as such, can have a positive cause reducible to the *will* of the First Cause,—which our present opponents (though not very consistently) will subscribe to,—otherwise, the boundaries between *moral* and *natural* evil are destroyed. And, indeed, by the by, this shocking confusion some of the Anti-Calvinistic Necessitarians have openly avowed; as if sin were not an *opposition* to the Divine *will* and *nature*, but *merely* the parent of *pain* to the subject himself; which sentiment will be noticed in the sequel. However, as every event must have some cause, so of course every *good act;* if this cause be in *ourselves*, radically considered, then *all* good is not *from God*, which is contrary to an acknowledged AXIOM. But if all good be from God ultimately, in such a manner that, by *suppressing* His creating act, the good act of the free agent could have no future existence, but, on the contrary, by His creating and providential acts they could be certainly future,—which rests on incontrovertible fact,—it irrefragably follows, that a free agent is *necessitated* to act, in our sense of the term, and consequently that NECESSITY AND FREE AGENCY ARE NOT INCONSISTENT.

Again; when Mr Fletcher objects, "It would be as absurd to create *free agents* in order to *necessitate* them, as to *do* a thing in order to *undo* it," he confounds two things that are in themselves extremely different—viz., *absolute* necessitation with that which is only *hypothetical*, which our author has openly admitted. And, indeed, what can be more reasonable than the supposition, that God has a right, decretively and operatively, to lay down *holy premises*, though He foresees that from these the creature will *certainly* draw a practical *sinful inference?* But if so, has He not a right, in like manner, to lay down such premises from which He foresees the creature will *certainly* draw a practical *holy inference?* Now *all certainty* must have *some* cause; such cause must be either in

God or in the creature ; to say that the *certainty* of drawing the practical *sinful* inference originates in God, is to make Him the *certain cause* of sin : which we alike reject, and rather say, this cause is in *ourselves*, that is, our essential defectibility as creatures dealt with in mere equity. To destroy this *defectibility* is as impossible as it is to destroy the *difference* between Creator and creature, which is the real basis of it. Here, then, the creature, *left to itself*, uninfluenced by sovereign undeserved interposition, is an adequate and certain cause of drawing the practical sinful inference, or of *moral defect*, without any *positive will* whatever on the part of God, as the cause of its existence. But if so,—that man left to himself in equity is an adequate *certain* cause of defect,—it must follow that if rational free creatures keep *at all* the law they are under, they must be *graciously necessitated* to it, that is, by a hypothetical, not an absolute necessity,—a necessity, I would add, which has the *disposition* for its object, not the *will;* and yet from which the will *certainly* chooses *good*, in proportion as it is assimilated to the moral character of Deity. In a word, there can be no obedience predicated of as *certainly* future, without a hypothetically *necessary causation* on the part of God.

§ 35. Mr Fletcher, in the following quotation, speaks good sense and sound divinity :—"God's *distributive justice* could never be displayed, nor could free obedience be paid by rationals, and crowned by the Rewarder and Judge of all the earth, unless rationals were FREE-*willing* creatures." But is it not wonderful that he should *deny* free agency to devils, and also *limit* the free agency of God ? Of the blessed God he says, "He does not exercise His liberty in choosing moral good or evil." On the other hand, of Satan he says, "His liberty of choice is not exercised about moral good or evil."* Surely nothing but a desperate effort to uphold a falling cause could dictate such assertions ; assertions these, diametrically opposite to theological and philosophical axioms. For—

(1.) The choice of good, in preference to evil, is not *praiseworthy* except it be *free ;* but God's choice of good in preference to evil is praiseworthy ; therefore it is free.

(2.) The will that does not choose good, in *preference* to evil, is not a good will ; but the will of God is good ; therefore it is a will of preference.

* Scripture Scales, part ii., pp. 279, 280.

The truth is, God's will is *free* by *hypothetical* necessity only; and not by the absolute necessity for which Mr Fletcher pleads. To say with him that the Divine will is *absolutely* necessitated to *anything*, is absurd; and as much more injurious to truth than the supposition of a creature being so necessitated, as God is superior to creatures. Of all *fatalisms* this is the most absurd. Hypothetical necessity, which Calvinists maintain, affords as firm and certain a conclusion as any premises afford a certain inference. Instead, therefore, of exalting *Fate* to a superior throne, binding the will of the Supreme, we say: God is a Being of *infinite*, invariable goodness, wisdom, rectitude, &c.; THEREFORE He always chooses good, rather than its opposite, with *infinite certainty*.

On the SAME infallible principles we also demonstrate the consistence of HUMAN freedom with hypothetical necessity. On the one hand, IF he is a moral agent, he is *free* from *absolute* necessity; IF his disposition be wise, good, upright, &c., we may *infer* his choice of good, rather than evil, in the same proportion. On the other hand, IF his disposition be foolish, wicked, depraved, &c., an evil choice may be *proportionably inferred*. Now, it is worthy of God, *without infringing the liberty* of the subject, to influence and ameliorate the *disposition;* from whence, in the same proportion, may be inferred the *certainty* of a good choice. This is the only necessity of good actions for which we plead.

And, indeed, Mr Fletcher, in his more conciliating moments, seems to allow so much:—"We never supposed," he says, "that the natural will of fallen men is free *to good*, before it is more or less touched or rectified by grace. We always maintained that the liberty of our will is highly consistent with Divine grace, by which it is put in a capacity of choosing life. Nor is this freedom derogatory to free grace; for as it was free grace that gave an upright free-will to Adam at his creation, so whenever his fallen children *think or act aright*, it is because their free-will is mercifully prevented, touched, and so far rectified by grace. All agree to ascribe to the free grace of the Redeemer ALL the freedom of man's will to GOOD. We give God in Christ *all* the glory of our salvation, and we take care not to give Him *any* of the shame of our damnation. At the Synod of Dort, the Arminians were sensible that a *gratuitous election* can be defended by Scripture and reason. We grant, that although God, as a Judge, is no respecter of persons; yet, as a BENEFACTOR, He is, and of course

has a right to be, so far a *respecter of persons* as to bestow His *favours* in various degrees upon His creatures; dealing them to some with a *more sparing* hand than He does to others. We grant, that none of *these peculiar elect* shall ever perish, though they would have perished had they not been faithful unto death; and we allow that, with respect to God's foreknowledge and omniscience, their number is *certain*. It is indubitable, that God, as a sovereign Benefactor, may, without shadow of injustice, dispense His favours, spiritual and temporal, as He pleases. According to all our doctrines of grace, persons who are in glory like Peter are infinitely more indebted to Christ's grace than persons who lift up their eyes in torments like Judas. Now, this election in which Judas has no interest springs from God's *free grace*, as well as from *voluntary perseverance* in the free obedience of faith. Therefore, Peter, and all the saints in glory, are indebted to Christ, not only for their rewards of additional grace upon earth, but also for *all* their *eternal* salvation, and for *all* the heavenly blessings which flow from their *particular* redemption." *

If it be asked, Wherein does Mr Fletcher's system differ from the Calvinistic one? the true answer is, *In one single point*—SELF-CONSISTENCY. Let Arminians holding the sentiments now quoted only be consistent with themselves, and we ask no more. If what is now offered to the public should prove instrumental in effecting so desirable a purpose, one principal design of the publication will be answered.

§ 36. To conclude; though I have examined Mr Fletcher's principles with a freedom due to the importance of truth, the reader is again reminded that I regard his personal character and the tendency of his *practical* writings very highly; especially his "Portrait of St Paul" † and "Posthumous Letters." He was a man of prayer, mortified to the world, heavenly-minded, steady and indefatigable in his exertions to save souls from death, and direct them to "Jesus Christ and Him crucified," and lead them in the way of holiness and peace. When, therefore, I view the *character* of Mr Fletcher, it is with no small regret that I find it requisite to animadvert on his *controversial writings*, and to observe his pre-

* Fourth Check, pp. 218, 219, 236. Fictitious and Genuine Creed, pref., pp. 6, 7, 10, 11; pp. 16, 18.

† A second edition of this work has been published in 2 vols., 8vo, and sold by Longman, in London.

judices running so high against—*Calvinism*, shall I say? Nay, rather, against a *man of straw* to which he gives that name.

And even in his opposition to what he calls Calvinism, I can give him full credit that his *design* was praiseworthy—to vindicate the Divine character, maintain the reign of holiness in the Church, and spread truth in the world. In this *design* I have the pleasurable consciousness of concurring; but how far the system he defended, compared with what is here proposed, is calculated to promote the proposed design, is now left for public decision.

SECTION V.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF SUBJECTIVE GRACE IN TRANSFORMING THE MIND TO THE DIVINE LIKENESS.

§ 1. Difference arising from a want of precise views of the nature of GRACE. § 2–4. FIRST, Which denotes, according to Scripture, sometimes an *exhibition* of Divine favour. § 5, 6. SECONDLY, Sometimes the *required effect* of exhibited favour. And, § 7. THIRDLY, Sometimes the *holy state of the mind.* § 8. This produced by an internal operation of the Holy Spirit, and may be termed *subjective grace.* § 9. These views of grace compared. § 10. Since the first constitutes but a part of the agent's motive; § 11. And the second is not the mere effect of the first; § 12. Hence the necessity of the third in all virtuous and holy acts. Further proved—§ 13. FIRST, From *Scripture.* § 14–16. SECONDLY, From *reason.* § 17–23. THIRDLY, From *analogy.* § 24–28. The *nature* of subjective grace more particularly ascertained.

§ 1. MANY controversial differences have subsisted, and now subsist, not only between Calvinists and Arminians, but among several other denominations of Christians, (some of which are making considerable efforts, in the present day, for the propagation of their sentiments,) occasioned, I presume, by the want of precise views of the nature of GRACE. The import of the term, in general, is sufficiently plain, as denoting *Divine favour;* but the difficulty, from which arises a difference of opinion, consists in this—that such favour is represented in the sacred oracles under several *aspects,* according to different relations and circumstances.

§ 2. FIRST, Sometimes Divine favour, in the way of *exhibition,* addressed to the intellect and will of the moral agent, is termed *grace.* Thus the *manifestation* of covenant favours, as the love of God to a perishing world in general, and in a higher degree to His people in particular, the pardon of sin, the gift of righteousness, salvation from moral evil and from hell, with everlasting life and glory, obtains that name. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men;" that is, the *gospel,* which is a

display of *Divine favour,* is preached to all nations and people. When the apostle Peter says, (1 Pet. v. 12,) "This is the true grace of God wherein ye stand," he evidently means the gospel, in which is made a glorious exhibition of Divine favour. "The word of His grace" is a periphrasis for "the gospel," and often occurs in the New Testament; in which the word "grace" must intend the Divine favour in its *exhibited* form. When St Paul says, "Ye are fallen from grace," (on supposition that the persons he addressed sought to be justified by the law,) he can mean only that they had fallen or apostatised from the true gospel,—that they had lost a just view of God's manifested favour to sinful men as the ground of their faith, and hope of salvation. When St Peter observes, (1 Pet. i. 10,) that some "prophesied of the grace that should come unto" the persons whom he addressed, he afterwards (ver. 12) explains his meaning thus: "they did minister [or, instrumentally exhibit] the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you." The apostle Jude speaks of some "ungodly men turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness." The very terms used in the connexion prove that nothing else can be meant than the exhibition or manifestation of covenant favour addressed to free agents, who perversely abused it. Being "ungodly" men, they were *graceless,* in the subjective sense of the word; and yet they *abused* "grace," which necessarily implies that it was something objective. It would be easy to produce other passages which are equally decisive in proof of this acceptation of the term "grace," but these, I presume, are sufficient.

§ 3. In order more clearly to prepare the way for the result intended, it is observable that the whole of Divine revelation may be considered either as a *testimony,* or as a *proclamation* addressed to mankind by the King of heaven.

(1.) The whole of Divine revelation, however diversified, may be considered as a *testimony* from God to man. It testifies concerning *God;* His nature, His perfections, His works, purposes, and dispensations. It testifies concerning *man;* his nature, his dependence, his obligations, his apostasy, his actions, good and bad, and their consequences. It testifies concerning the world and the Church, the present and the future state of existence, blessings and wrath, life and death, heaven and hell.

Now everything thus testified is addressed, immediately, to the *understanding and judgment,* but ultimately to the *will;* requiring

approbation of what it testifies to be true and good, and *disapprobation* of what it testifies to be false and evil. I said the address is *ultimately* to the *will* of man; to his understanding only as the *medium*, or the way to the *heart*, (a word often used in Scripture as synonymous with *will*,) which is the seat of choice and freedom, and not to the *state* of the mind, whether good or bad, though this has an important influence on the determination of the will.

(2.) The whole of the Sacred Scriptures may be considered as a *proclamation* of the Supreme King addressed to men. They proclaim *Divine favours* and *equitable requirements*.

They proclaim *Divine favours*. They not only testify that man is in an apostate and ruined state, but issue a proclamation of love, grace, and mercy. The Sovereign of the universe, regarding the human race in a perishing condition, announces forgiveness, righteousness, grace, life, comfort, strength—in one word, SALVATION. Such favours are implied in all the *promises* made to the Church and each believer; in all the *predictions* concerning the Messiah and His kingdom; in all the *invitations* to partake of the good exhibited; and in all the *preparations* made for the use of those who are invited. It is obvious that these proclamations of Divine favours, provided and about to be conferred, are addressed ultimately to the *will*, as well as the "testimonies" before mentioned. They do indeed convey great instruction; but all instruction is intended to reach the heart and affections, and to afford the will suitable means and inducements for comfort and obedience.

Again, the Sacred Scriptures proclaim *equitable requirements*. All *laws*, whether moral or positive; all *sanctions*, whether rewards or punishments; all *invitations*, *threatenings*, and *expostulations*, however diversified, and by whatever instruments or means conveyed, imply a requisition of *obedience*. They require the obedience either of faith, of love, of fear, of worship, or of service. Now, it is plain, though the intellectual powers are first and immediately addressed, the will and affections are ultimately aimed at in all these proclamations, both of favours and requirements. A bare consideration or contemplation of them is only a part of the implied obligation; and then alone is the great end of them profitable to man as the accountable agent, when the active powers, the will and the affections, are suitably influenced to practice.

§ 4. In whatever light we view the Holy Scriptures, however analysed, however classed, the whole and each part of the Old and New Testament must be of the nature of *moral means*, in some form, or in some respects, addressed to the *will* of the agent, in order to assist him in making his elections. Every address, of whatever kind, supposes that he is free in his choice, without constraint. Every testimony and every proclamation of Divine *favour* is in fact revealed, or *objective grace;* and is justly entitled *gospel*, as glad tidings to sinners. Sovereign favour lays the foundation; but equitable government demands compliance, and requires the moral agent to build upon it for eternity. Objective, exhibited grace may be abused; the Divine testimony disregarded or disbelieved; the heavenly proclamation undervalued and slighted. To the prepared feast many, though invited, may not come; to the Divine Physician many, though diseased, may not apply. These views of grace, well considered, will assist us in forming consistent thoughts respecting other acceptations of the term, or other important truths expressed by it.

§ 5. SECONDLY, Another acceptation of the word "grace," as used by the inspired writers, is the *effect* produced by exhibited favour, as before explained, in the minds of real converts. Thus they represent *liberality:**—"See that ye abound in this *grace* also;" evidently intending the exercise of a generous and liberal temper in relieving the necessities of the indigent. And thus the *Christian temper* is represented by St Peter, (2 Pet. iii. 18,) "But grow in *grace*, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." When Barnabas came to Antioch, "and had seen the *grace* of God,"—that is, when he perceived the appropriate *effects* of gospel truths,—"he was glad," (Acts xi. 23.) St Paul, in writing to the Hebrews, exhorts them to be observant, "lest any man fail of the *grace* of God;" or, as he explains himself, fail of a pure, chaste, and self-denying temper.

Now this gracious temper being no less the effect or fruit of the Holy Spirit than of evangelical truth in the soul, it has been always common in the Christian Church to call those tempers and exercises of mind which the Scripture styles "the *fruits* of the Spirit," by the term *grace*. For as each of these—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and the like—is called a fruit of the Spirit, so each is called a grace

* See 2 Cor. iv. 15, viii. 7.

of the Spirit, or a Christian grace. Thus in ecclesiastical and theological phraseology, we say, faith, hope, and love are Christian *graces;* and he who prospers in the spiritual exercises of religion is said to *grow in grace.* Does any one resist incitements and persuasions to vice with greater facility? Is he more easily induced to encounter difficulties in the discharge of known duty, or to forego personal gratification for the good of others? Is he more steady in his aim to bring every power of the soul to harmonise with the will, the plan, the glory of God? Is he more humble, more penitent, more meek, gentle, and patient, more loving and zealous, more joyful in tribulation, more peaceable in his views and deportment, more simply dependent on sovereign grace, trusting and rejoicing in Christ Jesus as the Lord our righteousness, having no confidence in the flesh, walking by faith and not by sight? Does he grow up towards the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," (Eph. iv. 13,) setting his affections on things above, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, forgetting the things that are behind, "and reaching forth to those which are before?" Then, in any of these or similar instances, he *grows in grace.*

This view of grace, therefore, we should consider as the *effect* of sovereign objective favour. *Faith* cometh by hearing the Divine testimony. We *love* God, because He is displayed, especially in the gospel, as lovely; we *fear* Him, because of His awful majesty, His glorious power, and perfect rectitude; we *believe* the Divine testimony, because God that cannot lie, deceive, or do wrong, whose authority is equitable and supreme, *declares* it; we *hope* to enjoy future good things, because the Divine word contains the promise of them to certain characters. Is the Christian born again, and made a new creature, "so that old things are passed away, and all things become new?" It is by the "word of God," or the "word of truth," which is an incorruptible seed sown in the mind. The new creation, or the new man, considered as an *effect* of revealed truth, is an assemblage of Christian graces, begotten and brought forth in the mind in connexion with the indwelling influence of the Holy Spirit. And therefore the very same effect is ascribed at one time to the *word*, and at another time to the *Spirit;* because both are concerned, in different respects, in producing it. For instance: if a "clean heart" be the *effect*, one time it is ascribed to the Spirit of God,—"Create in me a clean

heart, O God," or, in other words, "Renew a right spirit within me;" another time it is ascribed to the word of truth,—"Now are ye clean, through the word which I have spoken to you." And, indeed, in this manner most of the Christian graces, individually considered, are often represented. For instance: *faith* is an effect both of revealed truth and of the Divine Spirit; for "faith cometh by hearing," and "faith is of the operation of God." It implies alike a *testimony* to be credited, and a *spiritual view* of that testimony; and the effect, "believing," is properly ascribed to either of them. The same representation is applicable to *every other* Christian temper whatever which may be expressed by the term "grace."

§ 6. Now, as these dispositions and holy tempers are evidently *required* in those who enjoy the favours before mentioned objectively, and which are commonly denominated the "means of grace," there seems a propriety in calling faith, hope, love, joy, fear, &c., *required graces*. For when it is said, "*Believe* in the Lord Jesus Christ,"—"Let Israel *hope* in the Lord,"—"Thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God,"—"*Rejoice* evermore,"—"O be *joyful* in the Lord,"—"Let him be your *fear*, and let him be your dread;"—these and all other holy tempers, as effects of Divine truth, are authoritatively REQUIRED by the Supreme Governor. And to question whether *all*, or only *some* of those to whom the word of salvation is sent, are thus *required* to be holy in all manner of tempers and conversation, is the same thing as to question whether all, or only some of those who hear the gospel testimony are the subjects of God's moral government. What is *required* is nothing else than the *genuine effect* of revealed truth on a mind which is not in a criminal state either of indifference or dislike to it. Let the mind be in a right state, or what it *ought* to be, and the required effect will follow of course. But if God were *obliged*, either in goodness, in equity, in faithfulness to His engagement, or in any respect whatever, to make the mind what it *ought* to be, required grace would be as universal as the gospel message. No one would or could then "fail of the grace of God," as to the Christian temper. Nay, if God were any way *bound*, in justice, in honour, in favour, or in any respect, to *give and maintain* a right mind, or what *ought* to be, in order to *secure* the agent from transgression, sin would be impossible, contrary to fact. Therefore we may fairly conclude, that holy tempers are justly required of

God, independently of the *state* of the mind; because truth is an adequate cause to produce the required effect where the disposition is not faulty. Were any, when speaking of the Christian's graces, to prefer the term "*reflected*" rather than "*required*," the distinction would be sufficiently preserved, and the term properly expressive. For objective grace, or moral means, may be compared to *incidental rays* of light; and the *proper effect* of these means to *reflected* rays. And, indeed, both might be used, were we to maintain a still more accurate discrimination of thought; the one applied to the Moral Governor, the other to the moral agent. For what is *required* by the Equitable Governor, is *reflected* by the obedient subject. Yet, awful fact proves that requirement and obedience are far from being commensurate. Whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear, whether obedience or disobedience mark their character, the requisition is inflexibly the same.

§ 7. THIRDLY, Under the term "grace," the sacred oracles, moreover, intend *the holy state of the mind*, by which, in conjunction with revealed truth, free agents are effectually disposed to know, love, believe, repent, to receive exhibited benefits, to trust in the Saviour, to delight in the law of God, and to serve Him in righteousness and true holiness. When the Psalmist says,* "The Lord will give *grace* and glory," it is expressive of a gracious nature, or a holy principle, and not merely some exhibited favour. When the apostle James, after Solomon, says,† "But he giveth more grace: wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble," he conveys the same idea. The prophet Zechariah seems to intend the same thing in the following words:‡—"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." The Scriptures appear full of this important sentiment; the passages are very numerous, and require no comment. A few of them are the following:—"Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace;"§ "Who, when he was come," (referring to Apollos,) "helped them much which had believed through grace;"‖ "He said, My grace is sufficient for thee;"¶ "Grace and peace be multiplied;"** "But to every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ;"†† "Grace, mercy, and

* Ps. lxxxiv. 11.
† James iv. 6; Prov. iii. 34; 1 Pet. v. 5.
‡ Zech. xii. 10.
§ John i. 16.
‖ Acts xviii. 27.
¶ 2 Cor. xii. 9.
** 1 Pet. i. 2.
†† Eph. iv. 7.

peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord;"* "Grace be with thee: be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;"† "Let us have grace to serve God acceptably. . . . . It is good that the heart be established with grace;"‡ "By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed on me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me;"§ "By the grace of God we had our conversation in the world." ‖ In brief, this appears to be the import of those concluding short prayers in the apostolic writings which we call doxologies:—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you,—be with your spirit, —be with you all."¶

The same truth in idea is conveyed in many other forms of expression, both in the Old and New Testament:—"Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. . . . Uphold me with thy free Spirit;"** "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high."†† Thus Jesus:—"Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."‡‡ And Paul:—"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. . . . . Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. . . . . But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. . . . . If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. . . . . The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."§§ "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."‖‖ The Scriptures abound with passages of the same import.

§ 8. From representations thus decidedly expressive of efficacious influence, what less can be inferred than another distinct idea of *grace*, perfectly different from the two preceding? It is

* 1 Tim. i. 2. † 1 Tim. vi. 21; 2 Tim. ii. 1.
‡ Heb. xii. 28, xiii. 9. § 1 Cor. xv. 10. ‖ 2 Cor. i. 12.
¶ Rom. xvi. 20, and numerous other places. ** Ps. li. 10, 12.
†† Isa. xxxii. 15. ‡‡ John iii. 5, 6.
§§ Rom. viii. 2, 9–13. ‖‖ 1 Cor. ii. 12.

not *favour* exhibited objectively, as a testimony or proclamation of truth; nor is it the fruit or *effect* of truth, required by the Supreme Governor, and reflected by the obedient subject, as any unprejudiced person may easily perceive; but an *internal operation*, changing, renewing, regenerating, quickening, transforming, and helping the soul. This last is what I would call SUBJECTIVE GRACE. Its nature is distinguishable from every other sense of the term, in that it is *the immediate effect of sovereign will* IN *the soul. Exhibited* grace is *objective* only, and *towards* the agent; *required* and *exercised* grace is *from* the agent, as the voluntary *reflected* beams of the Sun of righteousness; but *subjective* grace is *in* the agent, as an indwelling influence. This implies the immediate presence of the Holy Spirit in the saints, as the *source* of all actions morally good and holy.

§ 9. Hence it is obvious that grace displayed in the word, though sovereign, is only the benevolence of God in the system of moral government. It regards man as a moral agent, with freedom to accept or reject it; and therefore is no other, from its very nature, than *moral means* in the way of proposal. The *excellency* of the object proposed, however great, raises it to no higher character. God himself and His infinite perfections; Christ in His person and work; the Holy Spirit, and all His riches of merciful influence, when only announced, exhibited, and proposed to the intellect and the active powers of the soul, can be considered in no other light than grace in the signification of *means*.

Considering attentively these three distinct views of grace, we perceive that required grace is an *effect* in the moral agent, and that the two others are united causes of that effect. The *objective* is properly and exclusively a *moral* cause; that is, a cause whose effect depends on the *manner* in which it is regarded by the voluntary and free agent, as received or rejected, improved or abused. It has a moral tendency of the best kind; but it may prove, through the agent's fault, either useless or even destructive. Thus the same gospel is either "a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death," according to the state of the mind. Objective grace is a seed sown: if it be found in a good and honest heart, that is, a spiritual state of mind, it brings forth acceptable fruit; but if on the trodden path or stony places, an unrenewed mind, it will come to nothing. The *other* cause, consisting in the Holy Spirit's immediate energy, as before considered,

has been sometimes very improperly called a *moral* cause; for it is not founded in the idea of moral government, nor does the effect depend on the *will* of the recipient, or on the *manner* of its reception. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."* "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."† Its most proper denomination is, a *physical* cause; a term used by many judicious divines to convey the idea of immediate influence on the mind. But it should be recollected that "physical," in this connexion, denotes *positive energy* producing its effect without the intervention of the intellect and will of the agent. It is not an *object* of choice, but a new *nature* influencing the choice with respect to its proper objects; a *Divine* nature, qualifying the soul to exercise itself in righteousness and true holiness. Nor does the idea of *supernatural* or *spiritual* affect the propriety of calling it "physical," in the sense now explained, because they also are included in the denomination. Some, indeed, have most improperly confounded the terms "physical influence," and an influence changing the physical powers of the soul. But the Divine energy for which I plead produces no change of the physical powers, though it superinduces a new nature, or a principle of spiritual life and action.

§ 10. It therefore follows, that *objective* grace constitutes but a *part* of that motive by which the will is determined to good. If it constituted the *whole* of the motive, and every will of a moral agent were *equally free* in its choice, there can be no good reason why it should not determine *all wills* alike. But this is contrary to fact. For the word preached does not profit some, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it. The fact is, that, however it is understood in common language, and even in some philosophical discussions, if by *motive* we understand that which *determines* the will in its choice, the *state of the mind* is the most important part of it; for this *alone* can *insure* a good volition. In proportion as the mind is the seat of benevolent, holy influence, its volitions will be good amidst the most artful and powerful temptations. But the excellence of the *other* part of the motive, irrespectively of benevolent influence rendering the mind well disposed towards the objects, never can secure a happy result.

§ 11. It follows also that *required* grace, as flowing *from*, or

* John i. 13. † Phil. ii. 13.

exercised by the free agent, in love, faith, hope, &c., is not the *mere* effect of revealed truth and exhibited grace *towards* the agent. For why is the *same* gospel to one a savour of life unto life, but to another a savour of death unto death? The difference is not in the gospel itself. The Bible is the same,—its language and exhibitions of truth and goodness the same. If, therefore, there be no *other part* of the motive by which the will is determined *in connexion* with the objective good, the will is determined to good without an adequate cause; which is absurd.

§ 12. Hence we may see the necessity and importance of *subjective grace*, which is the *effect of sovereign will in the agent.* This, as before observed, is totally distinct from objective grace, which is towards us, and independent of it; even as *life* is entirely distinct from food and exercise, and, as to its *nature*, independent of them. There is no avoiding this consequence without offering the most unnatural violence to *Scripture*, to *reason*, and to *analogy*. More particularly—

§ 13. FIRST, To interpret such passages as the following in any other sense than that of *subjective* grace, is nothing better than to offer the most unnatural violence to Scripture:—"Create in me a clean heart;" "I will put my Spirit within them;" "I will pour out upon them the Spirit of grace;" "Except a man be born of the Spirit;" "My Father will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask;" "He worketh in us to will;" "Who were born of God."

§ 14. SECONDLY, To deny subjective grace is inconsistent with *reason*. What can be more so, than to suppose that the will acts *without* motive; or that the objective means constitute the *whole* of motive; or that the *will itself* is its own motive, by a self-determining power unconnected with the antecedent and actual state of the mind? Yet one or other of these absurdities is unavoidable, if we maintain, with some divines, that there is no gracious influence but what is in, or inseparable from, the word. Their design, undoubtedly, is to maintain the honour of revealed truth, and the importance of right sentiments; but they would do well to consider that *they* do most honour to the Scriptures who assign them that office which infinite wisdom has appointed, and who do not ascribe to them what is inconsistent with the Scriptures themselves, and contrary to the justest reason.

§ 15. A few observations may perhaps contribute a little towards a juster view of the subject.

(1.) *Subjective grace* is not the *proper* and *primary* ground of moral obligation. Indeed, in one sense, *every* favour, however communicated, lays a ground of *additional* obligation; as different degrees of mental powers, the improvement of the mind by education, Divine illumination, &c. But the proper and primary ground is the objective good, or the advantage exhibited, constituting the *moral means* of the agent; and which forms but one part of the determining motive. Were the whole of the motive which actually determines the will the ground of moral obligation, it would follow that obligation and obedience would be commensurate; which is the very subversion of a moral system.

(2.) *Required grace*, which is reflected by the agent, is properly the result of *prevailing* motive; which motive is a compound of objective and subjective grace. No moral means ever did or can prevail, when *alone;* and therefore gracious effects will not follow. Yet the Moral Governor *equitably requires* the fruit of righteousness, where He has afforded the objective means; because such means are the proper ground of moral obligation. To suppose that anything more is requisite, is fraught with consequences grossly absurd. It would imply, either that the agent had a claim on being kept from abusing his liberty; or, that God ought not to leave him to the freedom of his own will; or else, that his own freedom is an infallible preserver; or, again, that this freedom is perfect chance; or, finally, that there are, in the actions of moral agents, effects without any adequate cause.

(3.) Though it be an important truth, that *objective* grace afforded is the proper ground of *requiring* reflected grace, yet it is hypothetically necessary, or infallibly certain, that nothing short of sovereign, *subjective* grace will, in fact, render any means available. To deny this, is the same as to assert, that the agent, in securing his happiness, is, in some sense, independent on God; which is impious. Therefore—

§ 16. To discard from our creed, as many professing Christians do, all Divine influence, except what is implied in Divine revealed truths, is inconsistent alike with the testimony of revelation and the dictates of impartial reason. That revealed truth is *necessary to beget* REQUIRED *grace*,—as faith, hope, love, knowledge, gratitude, and joy,—is cheerfully granted; because subjective grace cannot constitute a *motive*, without an *object*. But to *maintain* the *necessity* of revealed truth, in order to produce the fruit of exercised

grace, is very different from *discarding* the *necessity* of subjective grace. In fact, there is the most abundant evidence that *both* are *alike* necessary in order actually to produce the required fruit.

§ 17. THIRDLY, The sentiment I oppose is contrary to *analogy;* to which the Holy Scriptures often refer us. The sacred records very frequently represent the sovereign subjective grace of the Spirit under the notion of a Divine *life:*—"He that hath the Son hath *life;*" "Alienated from the *life* of God;" "A well of *living* water," &c.

§ 18. For the sake of illustration, let us glance at different kinds of life—*elementary, vegetative,* and *animal.* For instance, *fire* has what may be called an *elementary* life. Let the light or *flame* of fire represent required or *reflected* grace. Absurd would be the notion that *fuel* would *beget* a flame, without a distinct element or *principle* of fire; or that the element of fire alone would be sufficient to beget a flame, without fuel. The truth is, that flame is the product of *both* united. In like manner, both parts of a determining motive are necessary; an objective good as the fuel, and subjective influence as the kindling element. From both united in the soul, arises the holy flame of love to God and goodness.

§ 19. The same holds true in *vegetative* life. Suppose, for instance, that the verdure, blossom, and fruit of a plant represent the graces of the Spirit in their *exercise,* as faith, love, humility, meekness, &c. No one would contend that, because the sun and air *beget* the verdure, bloom, and fruit, therefore there is no distinct *antecedent* principle of vegetation. Nor would a gardener conclude, that because his plant has the vital sap, he need not expose it to the warmth of the sun or the influence of pure air. The fact is, that the verdure, the health, and the fruitfulness of the plant are the result of the vital principle and the genial external influences, conjointly. Thus also the soul which is blessed, whose leaf withereth not, and which bringeth forth fruit in season, has a spiritual nature and life, distinct from these effects, and of which they are the offspring, in conjunction with objective means. And He alone who gave existence to the plant, and to every plant its own peculiar nature, can restore the vegetative life when once lost. In vain is the dead tree planted in a fruitful soil, and well watered; in vain the salubrious air, the cheering light, and the

genial sun; the restoration of life is at the sovereign pleasure of new-creating energy.

§ 20. We may find another illustration in *animal* life. Let the activity and exercise of the animal represent the graces of the Spirit as exerted by the moral agent. No animal can subsist without food, air, and exercise; but we cannot infer thence that these could *beget* the *principle* of life. This is presupposed, and contributes no less than the *pabulum vitæ* to the existence of the exercised functions. The vital energies are, in truth, the result of *both* combined. The fair question is, not how one life propagates itself, in virtue of the Divine command, "Be fruitful and multiply;" but how life is *restored,* when lost. When a lamp is extinct, how is it lighted? when a plant has lost the vital sap, how is it revived? when a body is dead, how is it re-animated? Not by the accumulation of fuel, not by the surrounding elements, not by the exertions of man. I am aware how a Pelagian would endeavour to evade this illustration, by substituting another. Though the flame is extinguished, he would say, a little breath would rekindle it; though the plant droop and wither, watering will revive it; though life be suspended, the application of warmth and of stimulants will restore it. Illustrations are not arguments; comparisons are merely explanatory of our meaning. I have therefore no objection to a Pelagian, or any other, explaining his opinion in the way now mentioned. He considers the Divine life of the soul as *partially* gone; and that it may be recovered merely by the application of means, such as education, moral suasion, &c. I consider the same life as *totally* gone; and that no moral means, without subjective grace, a miracle of sovereign mercy, are adequate to restore it. Which of these opinions is founded in truth is to be sought, not from illustrations, but from scriptural arguments. My design, by comparisons, is to *explain,* not to *prove* my meaning; except when that explanation includes a scriptural statement. For instance, the Scripture compares Divine influence to a heavenly fire *communicated:* the disciples were *baptized* with it; and they *received* it, as what they had not before. The Scripture also compares the soul deprived of Divine life to a withered branch severed from a tree; and apostates, to trees plucked up by the roots. And when animal life is the ground of comparison, Divine influence is represented as quickening the dead, after the likeness of Christ's

resurrection. So that the illustrations as well as the testimonies of Scripture are in favour of subjective grace.

§ 21. Another set of analogical illustrations might be borrowed from the animal *senses.* Suppose we compare the exercise of required grace to the exercise of *vision;* with which comparison the Scripture abounds. Here are evidently three particulars concerned —objects exhibited to view, the vision, and the faculty itself. The vision, it is plain, is the effect of two things united—the object viewed, and the visive faculty. The one is subjective, the other objective; and the act of seeing is the reflected result.

§ 22. Again, let grace in exercise be compared, as it very frequently is in Scripture, to the act of hearing sounds. In this also two things must concur. In vain are sounds produced, if there be no faculty of hearing; and ineffectual is the faculty, if there be no sound. Hearing, therefore, *supposes* the faculty, and requires the sonorous percussion of air. The one is reciprocally indebted to the other for producing the effect.

§ 23. It would be easy to multiply instances, in all the other animal senses—*tasting, smelling,* and *feeling.* And it is observable that the Scriptures allude to them all, in reference to this very subject. The exercise of grace is *tasting* that the Lord is gracious; but there must be an *object* and a subjective faculty in order to produce the effect. It is also *smelling* the sweet odour of Divine truth; which implies the object and subjective quality. And finally it is also a *feeling;* which requires the same distinction.

Thus universal analogy proclaims an *object* and a *principle* to be necessary, in order to produce vital effects, in illustration of the nature of the case asserted in Scripture, and supported by reason.

§ 24. Let us now consider, more particularly, the *nature* of subjective grace. It is properly denominated a *Divine* nature, and is the immediate effect of sovereign, gracious energy, by which it is distinguished from a *mere natural* difference between one person and another. Natural differences are exceedingly various. Some human beings, as well as other species of animals, are fierce, violent, and untractable, others quiet, calm, and gentle; some of a quarrelsome, others of a peaceful temper; some courageous, and others timid. These differences, however, are only shades of distinction in the *same* nature; but subjective grace constitutes *another* nature—spiritual and Divine. Of this also we are furnished with illustrations from every part of animated

nature. Grains of wheat may differ among themselves, and are yet of the *same* nature, but, compared with barley, they are of a nature extremely different. One oak may differ from another, but the very nature of a cedar is essentially distinct.*

§ 25. Now, what constitutes these differences of nature? Why should a cedar differ from an oak, a rose from a lily, or a myrtle from a thorn? The genial influence of the sun and atmosphere, and even the soil itself, may be the same, and yet they put on forms the most diversified. Why should a horse differ from an ox, and both from a sheep, in so many respects, though they breathe the same air, eat the same herbage, and drink at the same spring? The cause must be traced to the *sovereign pleasure* of the Creator, (1 Cor. xv. 38.)†

* "The Spirit of God is given to the true saints to dwell in them as His proper and lasting abode, and to influence their hearts as a principle of *new nature*, or as a Divine, supernatural spring of life and action. The Scriptures represent the Holy Spirit, not only as moving and occasionally influencing the saints, but as dwelling in them as His temple, His proper abode, and everlasting dwelling-place, (1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16; John xiv. 16, 17.) And He is represented as being so united to the faculties of the soul, that He becomes there a principle or spring of a *new nature* and life. . . . . The sap of the true vine is not only conveyed into them as the sap of a tree may be conveyed into a vessel, but is conveyed as sap is from a tree into one of its living branches, where it becomes a *principle* of life. The Spirit of God being thus communicated and united to the saints, they are from thence properly denominated from it, and are called *spiritual*. . . . . The grace which is in the hearts of the saints is of the *same nature* with the Divine holiness, though infinitely less in degree; as the brightness of a diamond which the sun shines upon is of the same nature with the brightness of the sun, but only that it is as nothing to it in degree. Therefore Christ says, (John iii. 6,) 'That which is born of the Spirit is spirit,'—*i.e.*, The grace that is begotten in the hearts of the saints is something of the same nature with that Spirit, and so is properly called a *spiritual nature*."—*Edwards on Religious Affections; Works*, vol. iv., p. 104, &c.

† "Other power may make a great alteration in men's present frames and feelings, but it is the power of a *Creator* only that can change the *nature*. And no discoveries or illuminations, but those that are Divine and supernatural, will have this supernatural effect. . . . . All grace and goodness in the hearts of the saints is entirely from God, and they are universally and *immediately* dependent on Him for it. He gives His Spirit to be united to the faculties of the soul, and to dwell there *after the manner of a principle of nature*, so that the soul, in being endued with grace, is endued with a *new nature*. . . . . In the soul, where Christ savingly *is*, there He *lives*. He does not merely live *without* it, so as violently to actuate it, but He lives *in* it, so that the soul also is *alive*. Grace in the soul is as much from Christ as the light in a glass, held out in the sunbeams, is from the sun. But this represents the manner of the communication of grace to the soul but in part, because the glass, remaining as it was, the *nature* of it not being changed at all, it is as much without any lightsomeness in its nature as ever. But the soul of a

§ 26. It may be objected, If subjective grace be a *nature* absolutely different from, and independent of our will, and the means we can employ, what room is there for PRAYER, or for an expectation of obtaining advantage from any of the *exercises* of religion? I reply, where there *is* a Divine nature, sacred truth and ordinances, and especially application to God by prayer, are *suited* to its growth and welfare. And prayer is the most *rational* service in which a dependent nature can be engaged, because the very idea of this new nature being the fruit of *sovereign will*, is at once a ground of encouragement that we may obtain it, and a strong reason why we should apply to God for its bestowment. It is at His free disposal to give us His Holy Spirit: to whom, therefore, should we apply for the invaluable gift but to Him? And He has taught us that this is the right method of proceeding:—Luke xi. 9–13, "I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

§ 27. From what has been said, we may see in what sense the commonly received expressions, that *the word of truth is the instrument of conveying grace to the soul*, or, that *the Spirit never works without the word in renewing the mind*, &c., are to be consistently understood; and in what sense also those passages of Scripture are to be taken, where a saving change is expressed, sometimes *without*, and at others in connexion *with* the word. *Spiritual perceptions* of truth are, by means of the word of

saint receives light from the Sun of righteousness in such a manner that its *nature* is changed, and it becomes properly a luminous thing. Not only does the Sun shine in the saints, but they also become little suns, partaking of the nature of the Fountain of their light. In this respect, the *manner* of their derivation of light is like that of the lamps in the tabernacle, rather than that of a reflecting glass, which, though they were lit up by fire from heaven, yet thereby became themselves burning, shining things. . . . . Grace is compared to a seed implanted, that not only is *in* the ground, but has *hold* of it,—has *root* there, *grows* there, and is an abiding *principle* of life and nature there."—*Edwards on Religious Affections; Works*, vol. iv., p. 233.

truth; but the *light of God* in the soul, whereby it is capacitated to perceive it, must be in a direct and immediate manner from the *Father of lights.* The thing perceived, and the qualification of perceiving it, are not to be confounded. The *new man* consisting of new perceptions, judgments, passions, and exercises, is begotten by the sovereign will of God in union with the word of truth. And even a *Divine nature,* in a sense, is produced by the promises, in the same way. For what is the nature of God but love? Now, to possess and improve a Divine nature, in this sense, or *the outflowings of love* to God and man, we must contemplate and receive the promises in the light of God. By faith we receive them, and are transformed by them. The glory of the Lord shines in the gospel objectively; and the believing soul is changed into the Divine image, from glory to glory. But this is done, not merely by the *object* contemplated, but also *by the Spirit of the Lord.* And that Spirit exists, not in the *word,* but in the *mind.* This proposition, "God is love," contains a glorious truth; but it is no more seen in its *own* light than any other *truth,* however common. God, indeed, is seen in His *own* light, as the sun is; but the light by which we see the proposition to be a glorious truth proceeds not *from* the declaration concerning God, nor yet does it enter *with* the proposition, for all illumination of the *Spirit* is from *within,* not from *without.* Light in the mind, as an operation of the Spirit, is not a stream which has flowed from an objective truth, but a light created *in* the soul, by which it is enabled to perceive, in a spiritual manner, that God is love, that Christ is an able and willing Saviour, that the gospel is a bright and glorious dispensation of mercy, &c. This is beautifully expressed by the apostle Paul, (2 Cor. iv. 6,) "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath *shined in our hearts,* to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Here is included, not only the light of *knowledge* of the Divine glory, but also the *light of God* shining in the heart; from which, in connexion with its object, all spiritual knowledge takes its rise.

§ 28. Some, while endeavouring to exalt the Divine word, and to shew its importance in effecting a saving change in the soul, have greatly, though not intentionally, misrepresented the nature of the Spirit's operation, and thereby dishonoured Him. I fear this is a growing error in many of our pulpits and societies. When

Christ says that His words are *spirit* and *life,* He cannot surely mean that His words are the Holy Spirit and the Life of God; but rather that they treat of spiritual and living realities, and are adapted to nourish and invigorate grace, which is a spiritual and living principle. Some have compared the entrance of truth into the mind to a candle entering a room, when the candle and the light enter together, to the exclusion of all other illumination. But this is an erroneous representation; and the error consists in making the word (though compared to a light, a lamp, &c., because of the glorious truths it states, and their *use* to us in the *present state* of things) to be the work of the Spirit, and in thus making the Spirit enter the mind in the manner of objective truth. It represents the Spirit's light as coming into the soul from *without,* either blended with or accompanying the word, rather than as created *in* the soul. The sacred oracles are indeed as "a light shining in a dark place;" and this light "shines into the hearts" of some; but this could never take place without *another* influence proceeding from the Spirit of God capacitating the heart to understand the glorious gospel, which is only objective truth. Let us give to the Scriptures the things that are theirs, and to the blessed Spirit the things that are His. "The spirit of man is the candle [or, lamp] of the Lord," (Prov. xx. 27;) but the Spirit of the Lord must light it, for spiritual purposes. And in this respect, the words of the Psalmist (Ps. xviii. 28) are strictly applicable:— "Thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness."

APPENDIX;

IN WHICH ARE NOTICED

OBJECTIONS AND ERRONEOUS STATEMENTS MADE BY DIFFERENT WRITERS, IN REFERENCE TO SOME OF THE AUTHOR'S SENTIMENTS.

[Preceded by the Notes added to the Sermon on Predestination to Life, (see Vol. III., Page 361,) preached by the Author before an Association of Ministers at Sheffield in 1804, and published by request. These Notes were the principal cause of the discussion and controversy referred to in this Appendix.]

NOTES

ON SERMON ON "PREDESTINATION TO LIFE."

Note A.—Vol. III., Page 364.

Predestination to death or misery, as the end, and to sin as the means, I call "an impure mixture:" a mixture, because its connexion with predestination to life is arbitrary and forced; impure, because the supposition itself is a foul aspersion of the Divine character. St Augustine, Calvin, Perkins, Twisse, Rutherford, &c. &c., though highly valuable and excellent men, upon the whole, were not free from this impure mixture of doctrine. But of all modern authors, if we except the philosophical Necessarians, (Hobbes, Collins, Hume, Hartley, Priestley, Belsham, &c.,) Dr Hopkins of America seems the most open in his avowal of the sentiment, that sin and misery are *decreed* in the same manner as holiness and happiness, in order to produce the greatest general good. The substance of his reasoning is thus expressed by himself:—"All future existences, events, and actions, must have a cause of their futurition, or there must be a reason why they are future, or certainly to take place, rather than not. This cause must be the Divine decree, determining their future existence, or it must be in the future existences themselves. But the future existences could not be the cause of their own futurition; for this supposes them to exist as a cause, and to have influence, before they have any existence, even from eternity. The cause, therefore, can be nothing but Divine decree, determining their future existence, without which nothing could be future, consequently nothing could be known to be future." See his "System of Doctrines," 2 vols., 8vo, especially vol. i., pp. 110–217.

On the sentiment itself, by whomsoever held, I would offer the following strictures:—

1. It is a mere assumption, that *sin*, which the above proposition avowedly includes, has no possible cause of its futurition but either the Divine decree or the future existences themselves. For though God's decree is the cause of our being, faculties, and volitions, none of these, nor anything

else that can be traced to Divine causation, will constitute *sin*. Nor yet is it true that sin is the cause of itself; for then sin would be self-existent. It follows, therefore, that it must have another origin than either the Divine decree or its own existence.

2. It is equally plain that the cause of sin is not itself morally evil; for this would involve a contradiction, making cause and effect to be the same thing. Nor yet can the cause be morally good. For as from truth nothing but truth can legitimately proceed, so from good nothing but good can flow. Evil, indeed, is *related* to good, but not as cause and effect. Though evil could not follow were there no infinite good, no creature, no will, no freedom, yet something else must be sought as the matrix, where the monster, sin, is generated and fostered, and which, morally considered, is neither good nor evil. Therefore—

3. We assert, that the ORIGIN OF MORAL EVIL is to be found in the union of two principles, neither of which considered alone partakes of a *moral* character. These two principles are *liberty* and *passive power*. Liberty, it is manifest, is *morally* neither good nor bad, but is a mere natural instrument, if I may so speak, and may be termed a *natural good* of which God is the author and decreer. On the contrary, passive power is a *natural evil* of which God is not the author or decreer, yet *morally* considered is not evil. But this term, being little understood, requires further explanation; at least it is incumbent on me to shew in what sense I use it. My design is not to vindicate the use of it by others, but I adopt it to convey a specific idea, for which I find no other word or phrase more appropriate. By "passive power," then, I mean that which is of unavoidable necessity found in every creature, *as such*, in direct opposition to the self-existence, independence, and all-sufficiency of God. In other words, it is that tendency to nihility, physically considered, and to defection, morally considered, which of absolute necessity belongs to every dependent or created nature. Now, it is demonstrable that this, from the definition, cannot be the object of Divine *decree*, or of *will*, for it is stated to be of absolute or unavoidable necessity; besides, it is absurd to suppose that God has decreed, or produces anything, the existence of which stands in direct contrariety to Himself. That it is not a *moral* evil is plain; for the holiest creatures are subjects of it. God alone is exempt.

4. Let it be further observed, that the First Cause, being goodness itself, impels, whether decretively or efficiently, to *good only;* and of this character is even our being necessitated to exercise our volitions. Yet, when the exercise of liberty, in itself innocent, unites with passive power, the offspring of this union is moral evil. This, I am fully persuaded, is the true solution of the question, Whence cometh moral evil?

5. If it be asked, Where lies the difference between *decreeing* and *permitting* sin to take place? I answer, the difference is, that the one would be an act of injustice, the other is doing nothing. So that until it can be shewn that there is no difference between injustice and doing nothing, there is no force in the objection. That to necessitate sin decretively would be an act of injustice, and therefore an act incompatible with the Divine character, is, I think, demonstrable; for it would be to decree to

destruction antecedently to desert,—to annihilate the sinfulness of any act, making its evil nature to consist in its effects,—and to destroy the immutable essences of good and evil. Whereas to permit, or to suffer to take place without prevention, is *not to act, not to decree.* To "decree to permit," therefore, in strictness, is a contradiction in terms.*

6. But it has been said, the *event* is the same to the sinner, whether he be hurried on to sin and misery by a decretive impulse, or these effects are not prevented when in the power of Omnipotence to interpose. This objection would have some weight, if the happiness of the creature were the only, or even the principal end of God in creation. But this not being the case,† its weight vanishes. To illustrate this we may suppose that the event of a man's execution is well-known to a judge; but, instead of proceeding on the principles of law and equity, and to effect conviction and condemnation according to legal evidence, he orders the man to be executed clandestinely without any equitable process, under pretence that it could make no difference to the sufferer, for the event of his execution was certain! The event, indeed, would be materially the same to the sufferer; but how preposterous and unjust the conduct of the judge! Besides, the spirit of the objection reflects on God's *actual* dealings with His creatures, in every instance of their sufferings; because it is in the power of Omnipotence to interpose. And in fact, it must be allowed, either that the *happiness* of the creature is not the *chief* end of creation, or that the permission of sin is an act of injustice. But the case is plain, that GOD'S OWN GLORY is the chief end of creation and government, and that there is no injustice in the permission of sin.

7. It may be said, If the union of liberty with passive power be the origin of moral evil, and if the holiest creatures in heaven are both free and the subjects of passive power, how is it that they do not sin? If both are united in the same persons, does the one never terminate upon or unite itself to the other? In answer to this inquiry, we must distinguish between *having* the principle, and being under its influence without control. Though the spirits of the just and holy angels have in them the principle as the condition of their created existence, yet it is counteracted by sovereign favour. They may say, as well as St Paul, "By the grace of God we are what we are." The object of Divine support is the *disposition*, or the seat of moral action; this being made good, or pure, or holy, prior to all acts of the will, effectually counteracts the influence of passive power. The liberty and choice of a heavenly being, therefore, terminating on such a disposition, no acts but such as are holy can ensue. Hence—

8. If we would know how this is consistent with the actual fall of beings who were once in this condition, we must attend to another important consideration; which is, that when God at any time deals in *mere equity* with a moral agent, without the counteracting influence of sovereign favour, the inevitable consequence is that his liberty, or free choice, will termi-

* On this branch of the subject, see a discourse on "The Divine Glory, displayed by the Permission of Sin," by the Rev. J. P. Smith, pp. 15–18.

† In proof of this assertion, or what is here taken for granted, the reader is referred to President Edwards's Treatise, "On God's Last End in the Creation of the World."

nate upon his passive power. Hence the certainty of the futurition of moral evil, in all possible degrees and circumstances, without any decretive efficiency in its production. If it be asked, Why the exercise of equity is assigned as the occasion of this union, rather than sovereignty? or, Why leaving a free agent to the influence of his passive power should not be considered a sovereign rather than an equitable act? the best answer to this inquiry is a definition of the two terms. By *equity*, then, I mean the principle that gives to each his due; by *sovereignty*, a right to do whatsoever is not inconsistent with equity. And from this definition it must appear that there may be a twofold deviation from equity—viz., giving more than is due, or less than is due; more good and less evil, or more evil and less good, than is equitable. The former of these, more good and less evil, must needs be for the advantage of the creature; and therefore it may be called a gracious deviation. Without it, there would be no room for either mercy or grace. The latter, more evil and less good than is due, is properly called *injustice*, and is such a deviation from equity as is not compatible with the Divine character. Therefore, to do us good beyond our claim is an act of *sovereignty;* but to give us neither more nor less than is our due is to deal with us in *pure equity.*

9. Hence it follows, that when God deals with angels or men in sovereignty, (according to the definitions,) He does them good beyond their claim. But to make this to be the immediate cause of the sin of men and angels is absurd. On the other hand, it is incompatible with the Divine character, as before observed, to give them less good and more evil than is their due; and therefore this cannot be the cause of sin, as sure as God is incapable of exercising injustice. Wherefore, it remains that then alone can moral agents fall into sin when dealt with in *pure equity.* In the act of defection, or becoming sinful, they are equally free from being impelled by injustice, and upheld by sovereign favour.

Corollaries.

1. All the *good* and happiness in the universe of created beings are the fruit of sovereignty and decree.

2. All the *moral evil* and misery in the universe are the offspring of liberty, a natural good, terminating or acting upon, or united to, passive power, a natural evil, not counteracted by sovereignly gracious acts on the disposition, or the seat of the moral principle, which may be called analogically *the heart.*

3. Since every act and degree of liberty is perfectly foreknown to God, as the effects of His own decree; and every hypothetical tendency of passive power, though itself not an object of decree is equally foreknown, it follows, that every sin is as accurately foreknown as if decreed, and has an equally infallible ground of certain futurition.

Note B.—Vol. III., Page 365.

It is allowed that there is a difference between the cause of sin, as a

principle, and being a sinner; but when applied to an *agent*, to be the author or the cause of sin, and to be a sinner, is the same thing. Therefore, when applied to God, in no proper sense whatever can it be said that He is the author of sin. "If by the author of sin is meant," says President Edwards, "the permitter, or a not hinderer of sin, and at the same time a disposer of the state of events in such a manner, for wise, holy, and most excellent ends and purposes, that sin infallibly follows,—I say, if this be all that is meant by the author of sin, I do not deny that God is the author of sin, though I dislike and reject the phrase, as that which by use and custom is apt to carry another sense."—*Edwards on the Will*, part iv., sect. xi.

But though this acute and excellent writer disavows the use of the phrase, he nowhere assigns the true ground why it should not be used. The truth is, he does not seem to have been aware of any alternative between the certain futurition of sin and its being decreed. And his only method of warding off the must ruinous consequences appears to have been adopted for want of a better, and not from the satisfactory nature of that method. His view, in brief, is this: God is a being of infinite goodness and wisdom; He can will nothing but good; the system He hath adopted is the best; now, says he, "if the will be good, and the object of His will be, all things considered, good and best, then the choosing and willing it is not willing evil. And if so, then His ordering according to that will is not doing evil."

It is very seldom that this eminent author fails in his reasoning; but here certainly he does fail. The phrases "willing evil," and "doing evil," are not used in the same sense in both parts of the premises, from whence the conclusion is inferred.

Mr Edwards's argument, reduced to logical form, stands thus:—

To be the author of sin, is willing or doing evil in *any* sense;
But to choose evil with a good will and for a good end, is not willing and doing evil in *some* sense;
Therefore, God is not the author of sin.

Or his argument may be thus represented:—

He who is free from *willing* or *doing evil* is not the author of sin;
But God is free from *willing* or *doing evil;*
Therefore, God is not the author of sin.

The sophism analysed:—

He who is free from *willing* or *doing* (what is in *any* respect) *evil*, is not the author of sin;
But God is free from *willing* or *doing* (what is in *some* respects) *evil;*
Therefore, God is not the author of sin.

Now surely a system, all things considered, being best is no good reason why each individual part of it is good. And it may be forcibly retorted, a system which includes an infinite evil as a part of its institution cannot be from God. Nor can it be said that this is arguing against fact, without

assuming the question, that God *has appointed the evil* which is blended with the good. On the subject itself let the following things be considered :—

1. If choosing and willing a system in which sin is a decreed part is not *willing evil*, because the system is good and best, all things considered, then it would inevitably follow, that sin, because such a part of that system, *is not an evil.* But, it may be said, it is willing it for a good end. Does then a good end or intention destroy the nature of sin? Was the sin of St Paul or any other saint annihilated because he sincerely aimed at the glory of God? Or has any design, however comprehensive, exalted or sincere, the least tendency to alter the nature of sin?

2. Allowing, as incontrovertible, that the present system of things is the best, all things considered, and that sin is actually blended with it, it does not thence follow, that the sin itself is *decreed*, or is any part of Divine appointment. For not to hinder sin, is extremely different from being the cause or author of it. The one is perfectly consistent with equity, the other would be an act of injustice.

3. It is a sentiment so repugnant to all analogical propriety, to do evil that good may come, that it cannot be supposed a man of Mr Edwards's piety would have adopted anything like it, but from what appeared to him an inevitable necessity. And indeed whoever assumes the principle, that every event comes to pass from decretive necessity, sin not excepted, must of course be driven to his conclusion. But this valuable author had no need to recur to that opinion, in order to establish his theory of hypothetical necessity ; for this will stand on a rock, immovably, without such aid.

4. In reality, the certain futurition of good, and that of evil, arise from different, nay from diametrically opposite causes. The one flows from the operative will of God, and is foreknown to be future because decreed ; the other flows from a deficient or privative cause, passive power, when united to liberty, as before explained, which exists only in created beings, and in all these, as a contrast to self-existence, independence, and all-sufficiency. Yet *this* is the subject of hypothetical tendencies and results no less than the good to which it stands opposed, in all the boundless varieties of its blendings ; therefore no case can be so complicated, but to infinite prescience the event must appear with *equal certainty* as if decreed.

Note C.—Vol. III., Page 366.

"Equally impious and needless." *Needless*, because the existence of sin may be fairly and fully accounted for on another principle ; *impious*, because it ascribes to God the worst of all principles, the causation of sin. That God superintends, directs, and overrules the actions of men is worthy of Him ; and equally so that He does not hinder the existence of moral evil ; but that He is a positive and efficacious cause of moral evil, or that this is consistent with either His justice or holiness, can never be proved. Dr Hopkins, indeed, says, that "the attempt to distinguish between the sinful

volitions or actions of men as natural and moral actions, and making God the origin and cause of them considered as natural actions, and men the cause and authors of the depravity and sin which is in them, is, it is believed, unintelligible—unless by making this distinction it be meant, that in every sinful action, God is not the sinful cause of it." The author, however, candidly adds, "But if the contrary can be made to appear, this doctrine, with all that is implied in it, *shall be given up and renounced.*" As the removal of this principle, and the establishment of the other, appear to me of the highest importance in theology, a few remarks, in addition to those already made, may not be superfluous, as tending to exhibit the principle here maintained in different lights and connexions; and when all are properly examined, it is probable they will not be wholly "unintelligible."

1. God, JEHOVAH, the infinite and eternal Essence, which is of *absolute necessity*,—the self-existent, independent, and all-sufficient Being,—is infinitely knowing and wise.

2. This glorious Being views, in His boundless all-sufficiency, all *possibles*, with all their positive and privative tendencies. That all possibles have their positive tendencies is almost self-evident. Were there no positive tendencies, there could be no hypothetical certainty, no law of nature, no connexion between cause and effect. And it is equally true, though not equally plain, that there are privative tendencies in all beings but that One who exists of absolute necessity. To suppose the contrary, is the same as to suppose that a creature may be made independent and all-sufficient. But that is, every reasonable being must allow, absolutely impossible, as implying the grossest contradiction. On this demonstrated fact rests unavoidably the existence of that principle in every created nature which I call *passive power*. Yet—

3. It does not follow that the mere collateral existence of these two principles in the same subject must needs produce moral evil. Then alone does this take place when the one terminates upon, or is united to the other, without the interposition of sovereign favour. It is not in the power of equity to assist. For the exercise of equity is to give each his due, but to prevent sin is not due to the subject of it, otherwise no one could ever sin but on condition of injustice in God.

4. After all, it may be objected, that the Scriptures ascribe to God the causation of moral evil; as, hardening the heart of Pharaoh,—hardening whom He will,—making the wicked for the day of evil,—appointing to destruction,—determining the death of Christ—delivering Him by determinate counsel,—doing all evil in a city,—making vessels to dishonour, fitting them for destruction, &c. In reply to this objection it must be considered, that whatever the import of such representations may be, no interpretation which is unworthy of God can be the true meaning,—that the idioms of the sacred languages ascribing cause or operation to God must be understood according to the nature of the subject,—and, what is particularly to our purpose, that active verbs which denote *making*, *doing*, *causing*, and the like, often denote a declaration of the thing done, or that shall take place, or a permission of it.

Take a few specimens:—Thus Acts x. 15, "What God hath cleansed," means, what God hath declared to be clean. Isa. vi. 9, 10, the prophet is commanded to tell the people, "understand not, perceive not;" and he is ordered to "make the heart of this people fat, to make their ears heavy, and to shut their eyes." And what can this mean more than to declare a fact, either what they then were, or what they would be? So Jer. i. 10, the prophet's declaration of what should be, is called his "rooting up," "pulling down," &c. Ezek. xliii. 3, the prophet says, "When I came to destroy the city;" his meaning undoubtedly is, When I came to prophesy or declare that the city should be destroyed. Exod. v. 22, "Lord, wherefore hast thou evil entreated this people?" Moses means, Wherefore hast thou permitted them to be evil entreated? Jer. iv. 10, "Lord God, thou hast greatly deceived this people;" that is, permitted or not hindered them to be deceived by the false prophets. Ezek. xiv. 9, "I the Lord have deceived that prophet." Can anything else be meant than suffering him to deceive himself? Matt. xi. 25, "Thou hast hid these things;" *i.e.*, not revealed. Thus also Rom. ix. 18, "Whom he will he hardeneth;" He suffereth to be hardened. Rom. xi. 8, "God gave them a spirit of slumber;" *i.e.*, permitted them to slumber. 2 Thess. ii. 11, "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie;" *i.e.*, shall permit them to be deluded, so that they shall believe a lie. Exod. vii. 3, &c., "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart;" *i.e.*, I will suffer it to be hardened. Matt. x. 34, 35, "I am not come to send peace, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father;" that is, My coming shall be the innocent occasion of wars and variance. Jude 4, "Who were before of old ordained to this condemnation;" *i.e.*, foretold, or forewritten, as the word signifies; announced in the sacred pages, and proscribed by Divine law.

But the passage above all others which appears to countenance the notion that God is the cause of sin, is 1 Pet. ii. 8, "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even in them which stumble at the word, being disobedient; whereunto also they were appointed;" *i.e.*, unto which thing, their *stumbling*, they were appointed *because disobedient*. The Greek participle includes the cause of their falling; as Heb. ii. 3, "Neglecting so great salvation, how shall we escape?"—to which not escaping, they were appointed, *for* neglecting so great salvation. A striking contrast to this we have, John viii. 17, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine;" but the disobedient shall, according to an awful but equitable appointment, "stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken," (Isa. viii. 15.) We have a further illustration of this meaning in Heb. iii. 18, "To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?" *i.e.*, who were appointed to destruction. The answer is, the disobedient; for the original word is the same here as in Peter, under a different inflection. And it is added, ver. 19, "So they could not enter in because of unbelief." Thus also Rom. xi. 7, "The rest were blinded," or hardened; *i.e.*, were suffered to be blind or hard. And that this is the meaning is decided by ver. 20, "Because of unbelief they were broken off."

Upon the whole, Peter intimates, that none should be offended, at such

characters—men of learning and eminence—rejecting the Messiah and His gospel. Their end is what might be expected, as foretold by the prophets, according to God's righteous government, and His eternal appointment, or determination, respecting all such offenders. Their habitual unbelieving disobedience was the cause, but their actual stumbling at the word to their destruction was the natural, the righteous, the appointed effect. To this they were appointed, placed or set forth (as Pharaoh was raised up) by the righteous judgment of God, who resisteth the proud and disobedient; in order to shew forth the glory of His justice in them. They were personally appointed to exalted situations, being civil and ecclesiastical builders; they were suffered to reject Christ, in pure equity; and thus were deservedly constituted awful warnings to others.

Note D.—Vol. III., Page 370.

This notion, perhaps more than any other, has been termed *Baxterianism*, and yet it is not easy to say that Mr Baxter ever maintained it. He says indeed "all have so much [grace] as bringeth and leaveth the success to man's will;" and this in a discourse wherein he allows that God hath "positively elected certain persons by an absolute decree to overcome all their resistances of His Spirit, and to draw them to Christ, and by Christ to Himself, by such a power and way as shall infallibly convert and save them." He moreover says, "What if men cannot here tell how to resolve the question, Whether any or how many are ever converted or saved by that mere grace which we call sufficient, or rather necessary, and common to those that are not converted; and whether man's will ever makes a saving determining improvement of it? And yet," he adds, "this question itself is formed on false supposition, and is capable of a satisfactory solution."—*Baxt. Works*, vol. ii., p. 929. On the subject of this Note the author begs leave to refer his readers to Doddridge's Works, vol. v., p. 238, 239, Notes.

Note E.—Vol. III., Page 376.

The nature of God, His holy will, and our peculiar relation to Him, form an adamantine chain of obligation to duty which cannot with impunity be broken; from which predestination is so far from releasing us, that it forms another chain of gold that shall finally prevail; and Divine grace personally experienced is a silken cord to draw the soul along in the path of duty. But do these powerful ties render useless God's reasoning with sinners, His exhortations to repentance, to believing, to obedience, and to every particular branch of duty? No, for these methods are the very means to attain the end, and form a part of the decree itself.

APPENDIX.

[§ 1. Sermon on Predestination to Life the cause of alarm. § 2. Circulation of a manuscript on the subject known to be by the Rev. A. Booth. § 3. The *Christian Observer* the first printed opposition. § 4. The ground of the author's confidence in the soundness of his theory. § 5. Sin being in its nature privative. § 6. The source of the Observer's mistakes. § 7. The Observer wrong in his notions on the sinfulness of actions. § 8. What is meant by physically and metaphysically impossible. § 9. The Observer's admissions. § 10. The Rev. W. Bennet's Letters in opposition to Dr Williams's theory on the origin of moral evil. § 11. His principal objection examined. § 12. Mr Gilbert's Letters addressed to Mr Bennet. § 13. Dr Williams's theory of mere sovereignty objected to by Mr Bennet. § 14. Character of Mr Bennet's Thoughts. § 15. Mr Bennet's view of Adam's state before his fall. § 16. Objective and subjective grace. § 17. On sovereign withholding of confirming grace. § 18. Sufficiency and insufficiency for moral agency examined. § 19. *Modus* and the cause of sin essentially distinct. § 20. The Rev. W. Parry's strictures replied to by the Rev. Thos. Hill. § 21. The *Theological Review*, its criticisms replied to in five letters. § 22. First letter, on the unfairness of the Reviewer. § 23. Second letter, on the charge that Dr Williams had abandoned Calvinism. § 24. Third letter, on the Calvinistic doctrine, that the Divine purpose comprehends all events. § 25. Fourth letter, on the charge that Dr Williams had abandoned the luminous language of Calvin, Turretine, Witsius, and Gale. § 26. Fifth letter, a general review of the whole discussion. § 27. A letter to Dr Payne on subjective grace and sanctification.]

§ 1. PREVIOUS contemplations of Divine equity and sovereignty led me, while endeavouring to separate the real doctrine of "Predestination to Life" from all *impure mixtures*, in a Discourse on that subject with explanatory notes, to give my thoughts on the causation of EVIL as well as of *good*. In defining the predisposing, metaphysical cause of moral evil, I called it "a tendency to defection" which would have such influence on the free agent as must insure his *wrong manner* of choice, if not *graciously* prevented. The first edition of that Discourse excited some *inquiry*; but when a second was called for, it created *alarm*.

The idea seems to have gone forth, that I had some "new theological tenet," which must not be suffered to pass without critical examination.

§ 2. This resolution to examine gave rise to a *manuscript*, without the author's name, which within two years past has obtained an extensive circulation; and being soon recognised, from internal evidence and other circumstances, to be the production of the late Rev. Abraham Booth, it made a considerable impression on some who read it. To this an immediate reply was written, with a view that those who had perused the one, might have an opportunity of seeing the other. It was well known that Mr Booth had read much on theological subjects, and that his character stood high as an orthodox divine. Hence many who, from their own acknowledgments, were little accustomed to think on the subject with precision, or even in any manner to satisfy themselves, were set afloat. It seems they thought that HE who had turned over so many volumes ancient and modern, Popish and Protestant, foreign and domestic, Latin and English, must needs be right, and, therefore, were emboldened. But, in reality, so little was that good man accustomed to contemplate the truth of ideas, in their general and abstract nature, that he could not even perceive the difference between a metaphysical "tendency to moral evil," and a *morally evil tendency;* and that in reference to the ORIGIN of moral evil! But his reasoning, which some others appear to have tamely followed, can have no real force against my professed and explained sentiments. Such a torch can only answer the purpose of setting fire to a combustible image of their own fabrication. The mode which Mr Booth adopted, arising from an entire misconception and misrepresentation of the argument, though well adapted to sound an alarm, is only calculated to prove that he was either extremely ill-versed in the subject on which he wrote, or else acted from a motive which I should be unwilling to ascribe to him.

§ 3. The first *printed* opposition of any moment which was made to the argument for the origin of moral evil lying *exclusively in ourselves*, appeared in the *Christian Observer*, (March 1806,) where fourteen closely-printed pages were devoted to the subject. But though an immediate reply was written, the glaring want of candour manifested in the review, in connexion with an evident ignorance of the true hinge of the controversy, were at the time deemed sufficient reasons by many of my friends for treating the anonymous writer with silent neglect. As, however, I am now noticing my oponents in succession, I shall not pass by the Observer, but devote a few pages to the exposure of his contradictions and absurdities. Indeed, he seems not to have known his own mind; for what he advances in the text, he appears to recant in a concluding note! And while he declaims against *metaphysics*, he seems not a little at a

loss for any first principles on which to rest. Truth is one and consistent; but error is multiform and contradictory.

§ 4. The investigation of the abstruser subjects connected with theology is not, indeed, wholly discouraged by this writer, though he considers the object of his critique "censurable for excess." But the reader should be aware that the Sermon on the scriptural doctrine of Predestination does little more than glance at the origin of evil, because I concluded that additional notes would be more suitable for such discussion. On the former, the Reviewer is almost silent; while with respect to the latter he professes to take an alarm "at the *boldness*, not of the speculations, but of the *conclusions*." But if the conclusions be fairly drawn, what is there in them to be dreaded? He allows that the subject is "not forbidden ground;" and if it be discussed at all, how is it possible to avoid "abstruse investigation?" The propriety of *diffidence*, as well as the acknowledgment of *difficulty*, must depend upon circumstances. Had I expressed a *hesitating* diffidence, or a sense of difficulty *not surmounted*, I must have belied my convictions, and resisted the force of evidence. Twenty years ago, I should have been disposed to profess both; but closer investigation, the discussion, and to my own mind the satisfactory answer, of innumerable objections, with the incalculable advantages resulting from a conviction of the importance of my conclusion in favour of experimental and practical religion, and in the solution of controversial questions, (besides its superior consistency with the Sacred Scriptures and with itself,) have contributed to give me more "confidence" than the Reviewer is willing to justify, and raised me above difficulties with which he seems greatly embarrassed. But, it seems, he was persuaded *à priori* that the question "will, in all likelihood, descend to posterity with all its difficulties on its head." With such a persuasion, fair investigation is excluded; the cause is already prejudged. A person so disposed is not a humble inquirer after truth, but a sceptical objector, who probably would employ his time on another subject, or in the plainer duties of his calling, to much better advantage.

§ 5. I have not expressed myself very explicitly respecting the ABSTRACT NATURE *of sin* in the notes to the Sermon; but since my sentiments on this head are clearly implied in what is said on the origin of moral evil, the Observer has made free strictures on them. What he principally objects to, is the idea of sin being, in its abstract nature, PRIVATIVE. But by denying it, the *novelty* of opinion lies with him; since the general current of moralists and divines consider it abstractedly as a *defect*, or a want of what *ought* to be. Or if we say, It is concretively *what ought not to be*, the result is the same; the idea conveyed is of a *privative* nature. When we regard the idea as *positive*, we must in-

clude the *physical act*, in union with its obliquity, or defective manner. We do not say that the physical part of a sinful action is privative; nor has it ever been proved that the *sinfulness* of an act is *not privative*.

Mr Locke's remark, produced by the Observer, deserves notice :—"It will be hard to determine whether there be really any ideas from a privative cause, till it be determined *whether rest be any more a privation than motion*." With due deference to this great man, I do not see much difficulty in making the determination; though my want of diffidence may be censured by the Observer. The precise question is, Which is the most proper representation; to say, *Rest is a privation of motion*, or, *Motion is a privation of rest?* To my mind it is a plain principle, that all motion is *derived* from the first Mover, who is an *eternally active* cause, to the utter exclusion of all passiveness. And it is a principle equally plain, that no being in the universe can be said to be at rest, which had not, in a corresponding sense, a prior motion. Hence we see the Observer's mistake when he says, "Everything may be considered by the mind either privatively, or positively, at pleasure." On the contrary, the most important object in the universe cannot, without the grossest abuse of language, be considered privatively; not even by those who plead for Atheism. An Atheist may raise objections against the actual existence of a God; but no one possessed of common sense will question whether the idea of a God *supposed to exist* be *privative* or not.

This critic manifestly confounds IDEAS and APPELLATIONS; maintaining that because ideas "may receive either a privative or a positive appellation," the ideas themselves may be so denominated. What privative appellation would this writer apply to God? To estimate ideas as positive or privative by terms applied to them which are either positive or negative, is fallacious in the extreme. A child in grammar, and the youngest logician, knows that ideas decidedly positive are often expressed by negative terms, and *vice versâ*. Surely the application of the term "restless" to a moving body can never make the *idea* of motion *less* positive. Were ideas themselves altered by the application of terms to them, we should have nothing to trust to in ratiocination, and the consequence would be universal scepticism. It is granted that in many instances it is extremely difficult to *ascertain* accurately whether an idea be positive, negative, or privative. But this is no good reason why an idea in its *own nature* should not be one of these rather than another. In the scale of existence, indeed, every rank between the highest genus and the lowest species may be regarded, by changing the relation, as either genus or species, at pleasure: the reason is, such classifications are mere creatures of the mind; but not so the nature of ideas, whose archetypes are causes and effects, and other metaphysical relations. And though in a less accurate sense we should

say that in many instances the same principle may be considered as a *cause* of one thing and as an *effect* of another; yet we cannot infer that the idea of that thing, in its own proper nature, is *indifferently* either positive or negative.

Few things are more clear than that the word "sin" is a concrete, and the word "sinfulness" an abstract term; yet the Observer constantly confounds them. Thus he states and reasons:—"The abstract term *sin* seems variously used to denote either a particular class of mental qualities, or a particular class of actions, or perhaps more generally, a particular state or habit of the mind. But in what sense, or with what propriety, either a class of mental qualities, or a class of actions, or a state of mind, can be affirmed to be *in its own nature privative*, we are at a loss to determine." But *why* at a loss? The difficulty is of the critic's own making. The true question to be decided is, not whether sin in the *concrete*, but whether sin in the *abstract*, or the *sinfulness* of a moral action, be not *privative?* The Observer distinguishes between "mental qualities" and a "state of mind;" but do not mental qualities *constitute* the state of the mind? However, may not both be *defective?* And is not *defect*, or the *want* of what *ought* to be, a privative consideration? Nor will it avail to say that *sin* implies the *presence* of what *ought not* to be; for this would be only to use the term "sin" in a concrete form, concerning which there is no ground of difference. Hence the futility of the following observation:—"Vice is very commonly considered under the metaphor of a disease, and virtue as the health of the soul; but nothing can be more usual than to define health privatively as the *absence of all disease;* and perhaps in all languages it is no less natural to designate virtue by such negative terms as *innocence* or *spotlessness*, than to associate with vice such negative epithets as impious or unprincipled." What is this but saying, either (what nobody questions) that language is capricious, or that there is no such thing as a positive and negative idea *in itself considered?* But if so, there is no greater impropriety in calling the sinfulness of an act privative, than there is in calling it positive. Were the real nature of ideas capable of being thus metamorphosed by the use of terms, virtue itself might be stamped as a privative idea; any effect might become a cause, and any cause an effect; of nothing could we be certain, and every step in our pursuit of truth would be marked with sceptical indecision.

But by what rule shall we determine on the nature of ideas, since terms often confound rather than assist us? In my apprehension, we need only ascertain what is the *perfect state* of any thing, of any action, or manner of action, in order to arrive at certainty. Every degree of resemblance to that state is positive; but the want of resemblance, whether it be expressed by negative or positive terms, is a privative

idea. Now, *virtue* (or holiness) is perfective of the nature of man, and belonged to his primitive state; and vice, in every degree, implies a *want* of resemblance to that perfect state. Hence the idea of the former is positive, and that of the latter negative, by whatever terms expressed. Again, *activity* has a greater character of perfection than inactivity, as not only bearing a greater resemblance to, but also actually proceeding from the First Cause; and thus the *want* of activity is a privative idea. The same remark is applicable, for instance, to *light*, *life*, and *health*. These are more perfect states, and the resemblance they bear to the nature and agency of God, who is *perfect act*, is, irrespectively of terms, far greater than that of their opposites, darkness, death, and disease.

§ 6. In brief, the great source of mistake in the Observer, throughout, lies in his confounding the nature of *ideas* with the *terms* by which they are expressed; not reflecting that the former are unchangeable, while the latter admit of perpetual variation. This is evident from the following passage:—"The word *create*, originally referring to material objects, and vulgarly bearing a positive character, retains this character in its metaphysical use, and, therefore, cannot, without violence, be associated with words of a simply privative form." But the point in debate is not whether the *word* "create" bear, either vulgarly or learnedly, a positive character, but whether the *idea* to *create* be or be not strictly positive? And who that has not a desperate cause to serve can deliberately question it? When we say, "The man who just now walked freely out of the room *created his own absence*," we use the words *figuratively*, that is, *improperly*. The act of walking is dignified with the term creating, and the relative effect of that act, which is a nonentity, is also dignified with a positive name as if it were a real existence. But surely one who justly discriminates would not infer from this, that the real idea, stripped of the figure, is anything else than *privative*. When Jehovah says, "I am the Lord, and there is none else; I form the light, and *create darkness;* I make peace, and *create evil;*" the mode of expression is figurative. The substitution of affirmative terms can never alter the *nature* of the thing expressed. Divest the ideas of their figurative clothing, and their genuine nature will appear. "I create darkness." Here the *act* of removing the light is *figuratively* called *creating*, and the *effect* of that act is *properly* called darkness. The word "create" alone is here figurative. Again, "I create evil." Here, even supposing this term to refer to moral as well as to physical evil, the expression is evidently figurative, and the figure lies in the word *create* being substituted for the act of removing good. And the plain reason of the figurative mode is, that it represents more forcibly God's dominion over light and darkness, joy and sorrow, good and evil.

§ 7. Thus, if I mistake not, it is plain, that the Observer is totally wrong in his notion of the sinfulness of actions, or the abstract nature of sin; and is as remote from sound reason and critical accuracy, as he is opposed to the generality of intelligent writers on the subject. The "hypothesis" (or more properly the argument for the origin of moral evil being *exclusively in ourselves*) which he attacks, he candidly acknowledges to be "the result of some thought, and supported with some acuteness." With what acuteness it is supported, it is not for me to decide; but I may declare that it is "the result of some thought," since it has long occupied, at intervals, my most serious attention and minute investigation. I have endeavoured to view it in all its bearings, relations, and consequences; through every possible medium, and under every variety of moral feeling; paying a due regard to all that ingenuity could advance against it. My aim has been to investigate the truth of ideas, and the reality of things; regarding words and phrases no further than as they tend to convey my meaning. And, instead of making a man "an offender for a word," because he adopts not my phrase, I care not what language is used, if truth of sentiment be preserved. The critic observes, "We cannot but regard it as the accepted doctrine of a tolerably numerous class of individuals." I hope this remark is true; persuaded as I am that, in proportion as pure and undefiled religion prevails, in connexion with studious inquiry, this doctrine will take place of all others; seeing the plain import of it is, that *all good is from God*, and *all evil is from ourselves exclusively*, including the *true ground* of these acknowledged propositions.

§ 8. The Observer still objects:—"When it is pronounced to be impossible that a created being should be free from a natural [rather, a metaphysical] tendency to deterioration, we are tempted to inquire the force of the word 'impossible' as thus employed." I also am "tempted to inquire" why the critic should institute a doubt whether my meaning be *physically* or *metaphysically* "impossible;" while every intelligent reader must see with a glance that I must mean the *latter*. What less can my expressions design, than that the very conception of the contrary of what I asserted implies an absurdity; or, in the Observer's own phrase, "is utterly inconceivable on any supposition." How far the proposition is "self-evident" I will not contend; since what *is* so to one is *not* so to another. To *some*, even the light of the sun is not self-evident; but to my mind the proposition for which I contend is as evident as that the whole is greater than its part. "To attempt to demonstrate that it is *not* self-evident," observes the critic, "would indeed be a very embarrassing task." It certainly would; and so it would be for any man, whether blind or not, to demonstrate that the light of day is a dark thing. When he affirms, that "to *doubt* an

axiom is to *prove* that it is no axiom," he sufficiently proves his position to be no axiom. In moral science, will he not allow that this is an axiom—*There is a God ?* But because an atheist *doubts* it, it seems he *proves* that it is no axiom ! To merit this honourable appellation, it is enough, as I have already observed, that the denial of the proposition so termed is reducible to a self-contradiction ; otherwise, the very existence of an axiom must depend on the courtesy of a caviller. Even a mathematical axiom is not self-evident till the terms employed and the ideas they convey be rightly understood by suitable illustration.

§ 9. To some persons, particularly to the Observer, this proposition, that *all created nature, as such, tends to nihility*, is so far from being self-evident, that it is not evident at all. He allows, however, in one place, that it is a *truth*, though in another he *recalls* it. For, in a note at the end, he says, "The preceding sheet was printed off before we perceived that we had expressed ourselves in language which may be construed into an admission of the truth of the doctrine maintained by Dr Williams, as it respects the necessary tendency of all created nature to *nihility*. In a popular sense, indeed, it may perhaps be said, (though the proposition will be found to fill the ear rather than the mind,) that what sprung out of nothing at the pleasure of another must again become nothing when left to itself ; and for the sake of shortening the discussion, we were willing to concede thus much. We must at the same time confess that we do not quite understand the position that *created beings tend to nihility :* and we leave it to our readers to judge, whether there be much more meaning in saying that what *is* tends *not to be*, than in saying that what *is not* tends to *be ;* or, in other words, whether a tendency to *annihilation* in that which *exists*, be at all more conceivable than a tendency to become *existent* in that which *exists not.*" On this very singular mixture of concession, recantation, confession, and critical apostasy, I would remark—

1. The *concession*, that what sprung out of nothing at the pleasure of another must again become nothing when left to itself, does not fill my *ear* any more than another proposition, but it fills my *mind* as a glorious truth worthy of the infinite majesty of God.

2. The *recantation* also fills my *mind* as well as my ear, but it is with concern and horror at its legitimate consequences. It is left, it seems, to the judgment of the reader, as a *doubtful* point, whether the grossest pantheism be true or not !

3. The *confession* is easily admitted, that the writer does "*not quite understand* the position that created beings tend to nihility ;" and this appears to be his best apology for making it.

4. By his *apostasy*, the reviewer confounds Creator and creature.

For is not this the primary, essential difference between them : God *is*, and tends *to be ;* the creature *is*, and tends *not to be ?* If tendency *to be* or to *exist* belong *alike* to Creator and creature, there would be no *difference* in their tendency to exist. But is it not universally acknowledged that God's tendency to exist is *absolute*, as opposed to *contingent ?* and equally so, that every other being is contingent, and that the very idea of contingent being is, that it exists ONLY by the *will* of another ; and therefore has no tendency *to be* in its own nature ?

Nor will it alter the case to say, that a creature *tends to exist* in virtue of EXISTING LAWS. For the absurdity still returns. Are not *existing laws* CONTINGENT, in opposition to absolute ? And if so, *they* also have no tendency *to be* in their own nature, any more than a created being. For what are the *laws* of nature but the *appointed order* of created existence ? If *appointed*, they must be *contingent ;* and if contingent, they exist ONLY by the will of another. And surely what *so* exists has no tendency to exist in its *own nature ;* and what has no tendency to exist in its own nature has, in its own nature, a tendency *not to exist :* for I suppose it is sufficiently plain that there is no *medium* between a tendency *to exist*, and a tendency *not to exist.* Therefore, these LAWS OF NATURE themselves tend *not to be*, in the *same sense* as the creatures which exist by them.

§ 10. Very different, in some respects, is the production of the Rev. WILLIAM BENNET, in a series of Letters addressed to me, respecting the Origin of Moral Evil. For the civil and kind manner in which he expresses himself, on the score of personal respect, he has my friendly and grateful acknowledgments. Yet his method of investigation is not quite fair, however fairly intended ; for though he produces *my words*, yet he puts his *own meaning* on them. That sort of sophism which is called *imperfect enumeration* appears peculiarly prominent in most, if not in all his arguments and objections. For if, while enumerating the different acceptations of *tendency*, *power*, and the like, he include only their *physical*, to the exclusion of their *metaphysical* acceptations, even contrary to an explicit caution against such conduct, his argument must needs be sophistical. If an author, when under the necessity of employing words capable of different meanings, be not at liberty to fix upon those that suit his purpose, to the exclusion of all others, there is an end of all fair discussion. If, for instance, I am not at liberty to use the word "tendency," sometimes in a physical, at other times in a moral, or in a metaphysical sense, according to the nature of the subject, but a sense is given it by an opponent totally different from the avowed general design of the argument, fair discussion is converted into logomachy, the primary principles in debate are

confounded, and everything is enveloped in obscurity and confusion. Mr Bennet must know, that I do not contend about words,—whether "tendency," "passive power," or any other,—provided the ideas be allowed, and appropriate words be adduced to convey them. Surely the expressions "*tendency* to nihility, *physically* considered," and "*tendency* to defection, *morally* considered," could not be understood to mean a *physical tendency* and a *moral tendency*, but by an entire oversight of the nature of the subject; which was to shew the *certain connexion* between *contingent* existence, both physical and moral, and *defection*, when that contingent existence is considered in its own proper nature. *Physical* defection is *nihility*, and *moral* defection is *transgression*. Now, the sentiment maintained is, (if haply I may be rightly understood,) that there is in the *nature* of *every* contingent existence a *certain connexion* with *nihility*, which connexion immediate Divine energy alone can prevent. And is not this implied in the commonly-received doctrine of providential conservation? And why a hypothetically *certain connexion* with *nihility* may not be expressed by a metaphysical *tendency* to *nihility*, it is difficult to guess.

§ 11. But Mr Bennet's principal objection, and indeed the substance of his book, lies against that branch of the subject which relates to *transgression*. I have uniformly maintained, in effect, that the Divine volition *alone* prevents a physical *contingent* existence from *ceasing to be*. Now, as there is but one *absolute* existence; as the *goodness* of a creature is no less of a *contingent* nature than the being in which it inheres; and as the very idea of a contingent nature is, that it exists *only* by the will of another; is it not evident, that such is the connexion between mental goodness and ceasing to be good, (good, I mean, as to its *physical* existence,) that nothing keeps them asunder but the sovereign will of God? Suppose a mind righteous and holy, at any time, or in any world; suppose it possessed of physical powers capable of producing moral acts; suppose it also endowed with suitable objects and unrestrained freedom of choice. The question is now fairly put, Is there any *certain connexion* between this contingent goodness, considered in *its own nature*, and the abuse of free-will, or transgression? In other words, is there anything besides the sovereign will of God to prevent the connexion? Is it *chance?* There is no such thing. Is it some power or principle in the mind? That is *contingent*. But to be contingent, as before shewn, is to be kept from the opposites of being or well-being, that is, from nihility or transgression, *only* by the continued will of Him whose nature is absolute. Now, what is the unavoidable inference? It is, That *all our good is of God*, and *all our evil from ourselves*. These are the legitimate consequences of my sentiments, and nothing worse; and yet Mr Bennet trembles for consequences!

Far greater cause have I to tremble for the consequences of the *opposite* system; as confounding, in some important respects, the essential *difference* between Creator and creature,—as implying that the goodness of men and angels is not *contingent*,—as ascribing to "the old idol free-will" what belongs to the *grace* of God,—as transferring to "the new goddess contingency" what properly belongs to *ourselves*,—as instituting a series of *self-inconsistencies* calculated to generate scepticism and infidelity,—as leading the inquisitive mind to a broad sea, without affording it either compass or rudder,—as exalting *self* to such a degree, that we are not more the cause of our *evil* than of our *good*,—as casting a foul aspersion on the Divine character, that He was *bound* to afford men and angels what He has not *in fact* afforded,—as attempting to wrench from us the use of intuitive knowledge, and the strongest argument for the being and perfections of God,—as offering insult to demonstrative and primary truths,—as instituting a kind of defectibility which has no cause in the nature of things,—as giving such a view of morality as is incompatible with Scripture,—as allowing the *fact* of moral evil, for which result there was *no tendency* of any kind, no predisposing adequate cause in the universality of things,—and as charging the Deity with cruelty and injustice, because He does not give to His creatures more than their due! These, and innumerable other horrible consequences, it would be easy to prove, are the genuine offspring of Mr Bennet's opposing scheme. But it is needless to illustrate such consequences, after what Mr Gilbert has published, in a series of Letters to Mr Bennet; whose *arguments* have been left unanswered in Mr Bennet's Appendix, amidst a very improper and undeserved severity of remark.

§ 12. There is one passage, however, (pp. 94–96,) not sufficiently noticed by Mr Gilbert, which requires some animadversion. "In your statement of the causation of sin as predicated of man," says Mr Bennet, "there seems to be great logical inaccuracy; in that the converse of your first proposition is not properly stated." By "logical inaccuracy," Mr Bennet must mean something in the statement that affects the *import* of the proposition; for he has too much good sense and learning to suppose that an author is obliged to wear the trammels of logical *forms* in statements and reasonings. At that rate, every deviation in argument from figure and mood would be "logical inaccuracy;" and in order to be *logical*, a man must be *pedantic*. The objection therefore must be against the *sense* of the second proposition. Now, let us examine that sense, and see wherein it differs from what Mr Bennet assigns it. My two explanatory propositions are these:— "Freedom terminating on a good disposition, supported by sovereignty, produceth holy acts alone." Here, by the way, the reader should keep

in mind that "freedom" is used for *free-will*, or the will considered as *free;* and the words "terminating on" contain a mathematical allusion to the formation of an angle by one line terminating on another. For as one line cannot form an angle, nor yet two lines when there is no terminating junction; so liberty alone, or the state of the mind alone, without a terminating junction, can produce no *moral effect.* Now, what is the second proposition? It is this:—"But a mind or disposition (*i.e.*, *any* mind or disposition, however good,) not supported by sovereignty, but left in equity to its native passive power, being now the subject, and freedom terminating upon it in that state, becomes instantly the seat of moral evil." These are the two propositions, expressed without the least intention of evading any difficulty, or of stating the latter as formally the converse of the former. How then would Mr Bennet have it expressed? Thus, "but freedom, though terminating on a good disposition, if not supported by sovereignty, necessarily produceth evil only." If Mr Bennet can gain any advantage from this mode of expression, he is welcome to it. But probably the impartial reader will judge with me that in point of argument he will not be benefited.

§ 13. However, Mr Bennet's grand objection to the statement in the second proposition is, that I ascribe to "mere sovereignty" what he apprehends to be "grounded in Divine wisdom and equity." I allow and maintain, no less than the objector, that it was wise, equitable, and becoming, for an accountable creature to be *formed* righteous, holy, and good. It is also allowed, that his righteousness, integrity, or perfection, could not depart from him but by the *free* act of his own will. Now, what is the "moot point?" It is to ascertain the *proper cause* why a perfect creature came to act morally wrong; or *why* a temptation to evil, whether strong or weak, *succeeded* on the mind of a creature confessedly perfect. Instead of answering this question, Mr B. contends that a perfect creature is *made* so in Divine wisdom and equity; and that while he *continued* so, he was "not supported by sovereignty," but by "a becomingness and moral meetness in the conduct of God towards His accountable creatures." It seems then, as a fair consequence, that, as far as God is concerned in the business, when a perfect creature became sinful, the operations of wisdom, equity, becomingness, and moral meetness, were *suspended!*

Will Mr Bennet contend, that though a *good* disposition was not *supported* by sovereignty, nor yet by *equity*, after it was first formed, yet the perfect creature *supported itself?* Surely not; for it would be to contend for the rankest Pelagianism that ever complimented a creature, or insulted sovereign grace. And yet, how can the consequence be avoided? There is but one way; and that is, that the *goodness* of a

perfect creature, in every degree and in every period, is *supported by sovereignty*, or sovereign *benevolence*. If God were under obligation, either in wisdom, in equity, in becomingness, or in moral meetness, to *continue* the goodness once bestowed, it must have *always* remained unimpaired. But if the goodness first given did not *in fact* continue, and the Divine character is infinitely remote from willing the *sinfulness* of sin, the perfect creature, it will be said, was *left to its own fate*, and it *happened* to fall! This will not suffice; it is to fly from the face of glorious truth to the gloomy covert of ignorance. *Happened* to fall! This is to transfer the *cause* of sin from *ourselves* to "the new goddess *contingency*." And were this admitted, the converse of it must be admitted also—the perfect creature *happened* to continue good till it fell. *Happened* to continue! This also will not do; it is to offer incense to "the old idol free-will," to place it on the throne of sovereign benevolence, and to acknowledge it as the *cause* of good and happiness to a perfect creature.

It has been observed before, that most of Mr Bennet's objections arise from a false apprehension of my terms; but it is fair to ask, Was he not at liberty to learn, without much trouble, whether that *sense* of terms which he adopted was *mine?* Was he not aware also, when about to print and publish those Letters, that my life was despaired of by my friends; and that, for some time after, to engage in controversy, under any public pledge, might have cost me a dangerous relapse? Why then should he indulge complaints that a reply was made to his Letters by another hand rather than my own? He was privately assured, that no want of personal respect, nor any affected contempt of his production, induced me to decline an immediate notice of it; and the real cause was thus assigned:—"The precarious state of my health, *as I before stated to you*, together with the uniform advice of medical and other friends, prevented my engaging in any work which required close application of writing, or extra exercise of mind, especially so near the time when I had been violently attacked the two preceding winters; your work, therefore, was to be answered by another, or not at all, on its first appearance." Whatever view Mr Bennet is pleased to take of Mr Gilbert as an opponent, I consider him as a very able advocate of gospel truth, and especially of consistent Calvinism; and his answer to Mr Bennet, as far as argument is concerned, as a masterly performance.

§ 14. Besides the Appendix to his Letters, so unworthy of his pen, Mr Bennet has recently published "Thoughts on the Primary Condition of Intelligent Accountable Creatures," &c.; which he supposes, in his advertisement, "may furnish a positive substitute for that hypothesis

against which the reasoning of his remarks was directed." Here I expected to find a "digested view" of this respectable author's thoughts, something like a *consistent system;* but in this I was greatly disappointed, for very little appears beside an *avowal* of some important truths, and a modest *ignorance* of almost every point of difficulty,—a *rehearsal* of old objections, already answered in a form somewhat different,—with a number of *references* and *quotations* at the end, principally from Turretine, and a few from Edwards, Calvin, Boston, Ames, Witsius, Reynolds, Owen, and Guyse, which, in my view, are very little to the main purpose.

Among the important points *avowed*, the following gave me no small pleasure :—"The primary and essential cause of holiness in all intelligent creatures is that influence which God imparts to their derived nature," (p. 8.) And again :—"These pure intelligences existed in a state of *dependence* on their Creator, and could not exercise their faculties and principles without influence from Him, the infinite original essence," (p. 10.) But then it is soon added, "It is absurd to speak of their having a 'tendency to nihility, physically considered;' since the all-efficient will of Jehovah hath unchangeably established, as to all that stands connected with their physical existence, a *direct contrary* tendency." A singular argument: a creature has no tendency to nihility, *in itself* considered, because it has the contrary tendency from the will of *another!* Surely a physical tendency to exist by another's will is not inconsistent with a metaphysical or hypothetical tendency to nihility!

However, it is further acknowledged, that, "although their concreated principles of action were habitually good, yet, as they derived these, together with their being, from Him the first cause of all things, and had their individual subsistence as created essences in a *dependence* upon Him, as the fountain of life and goodness, these very habits or principles of action could only be cherished and kept in lively exercise, and in a full direction to their proper ends, by a *continued communication of holy influence* from Himself; even as the living branches of a tree flourish and bear their fruit by means of a constant supply from the root, or from the soil through the medium of the root," (p. 12.) But it soon follows, "Nor have we hitherto seen anything *in their nature* and constitution, as holy perfect creatures, that should in the least militate against, or indispose them to, the fullest exercise of such moral dependence" as before described. If, however, there was nothing in *their nature*, nor yet in the nature of *God*, to indispose them to continue holy, it must have been *impossible* for them to change for the worse; which is offering defiance at once to sound reason and to matter of fact: for they *did* change for the worse, and there must have been a *cause* for it *in them-*

selves, except moral deterioration be impiously charged upon God. Were there no such *cause in themselves*, the non-communication of efficacious grace would not, could not, produce the effect; for no creature can change from holy to sinful but by his *own* act.

§ 15. Mr Bennet apprehends we have not "any substantial ground to suppose that Adam, after the first moment of his existence, was under any such positive Divine influence as efficaciously 'controlled' any one principle in his holy nature; any more than we have reason to imagine that there existed in his nature, as a pure and perfect creature, any principle, however latent, which *needed* such control." What is this in effect but saying, that by *chance* he stood, and by *chance* he fell? It is worthily acknowledged, respecting our first parents, that "there was much *grace* and *benignity* intermingled with the whole of that original constitution, under which they were placed as moral probationers," (p. 20;) and yet there was a "permission" of their defection, (p. 22.) Are we then to infer that they would *certainly* transgress *if permitted?* or, that *perchance* they would fall? Is there any medium? It is further urged, that if "any Divine communication which had been once imparted to the creature was withdrawn or withheld, antecedently to his abuse of liberty as a moral agent, the creature, from that moment, *ceased to be what he was* when he came into existence." But "ceasing to be *what he was*" must not be confounded with his "ceasing to be *righteous*." The former might be, and he remain innocent and righteous; but the latter could take place only by his *own act*.

Mr Bennet institutes a contrast, or some important difference, between "positive efficiency," and "Divine communication," and allows that the former might be suspended, but not the latter. His words are, "In respect of positive efficiency, and of that only, we may conceive of a suspension of Divine influence, or rather we may call it the NON-EXERTION OF CONFIRMING GRACE," (p. 22.) But what is this "confirming grace?" The author had before stated, (p. 9,) that "holiness in creatures, as arising from Divine communication, may be viewed either as a *transient effect*, or an *imparted principle* and moral habit of the mind." It is natural to ask, With which of these should "confirming grace" be classed? Is it a *transient effect*, or is it an *imparted principle?* If the *latter*, the author must contradict himself. If the *former*, it could not be *suspended*, for it was never *given;* except we say that *confirming* grace was given to creatures which at the same time were *permitted* to fall; which will be thought nothing short of a contradiction in terms. But perhaps Mr Bennet's meaning is, that the positive efficiency producing transient effects, *which would have confirmed* perfect creatures, was *not exerted*. If so, I have the pleasure to agree with him.

I must, however, enter a protest against the sentiment that Adam

had no "positive efficiency" given him for the production of *holy acts* during his integrity, for reasons assigned in different parts of this publication. Not that I suppose a perfect creature's *will* is *controlled* in his holy acts; but rather, as repeatedly noticed, that his *nature* or state of mind, from which, or according to which, the will *freely acts*, was the subject of positive influence, as the *sole cause* why the *free* will chose aright rather than amiss; or, which amounts to the same thing, why the soul's real good *appeared* to be so, and a creature whose views were limited, amidst an endless variety of comparative good, chose the right. Thus his acts were *strictly* his *own*, as being voluntary and uncontrolled; while the disposition, habit, or *nature* from whence they sprung was the effect of grace. I must also enter my protest against Mr Bennet's notion of "confirming grace," if thereby he means anything different in its *nature* (as contradistinguished from *continuance* or *degree*) from what Adam had in his perfect state. If there be any difference allowed between what he calls "holiness as a *transient effect*" and "holiness as an *imparted principle*," each "arising from Divine communication," does that difference consist in the *nature* of the influence, in its *continuance*, or in its *degree*? If in the *first*, it should have been shewn from Scripture, from principles of reason, or some source of evidence. If in either of the two last, we are agreed. Will it be said, that the *nature* of the "Divine communication" must be different, since the *effects* are different? The argument is not good, except on supposition of *continued* sameness, or at least an *exact* similarity of state in the subject on whom it is conferred; which is not admitted.

§ 16. A distinction, with respect to grace, far more important in my view, as well as more accurate, is that which divines have commonly denominated *objective* and *subjective*. These are perfectly and clearly distinct in their nature. The one consists in an *exhibition* of Divine favour to the agent; the other, in a *communication* of holy influence. The former is the instrument of moral government, the latter is the process of sovereign grace. But to denominate a variety of *holy* Divine communications by "that sort of momentary impulse, or fleeting impression, which leaves no fixedness of character, or well-grounded sentiment in the mind," and "a congeniality of the mental state with the nature of truth, and with the obligation and reasonableness of duty," appears to me neither just nor useful. Is the *continuance* of the "congeniality" in question maintained, or is it conceivable that it should be maintained, except by a "momentary impulse," after the manner of providential sustentation? Nay, was it not providential sustentation itself? Is it not very generally, if not universally allowed, that as "Providence is as it were a continued creation," so it extends to well-

being or holiness no less than to personal existence? Mr Bennet, however, supposes that there is a "distinction to be made between the sustentation of Providence, and the efficiency of grace." In one respect, indeed, this may be allowed, but not in another. To *sustain* or continue concreated holiness (except, *peradventure*, it could continue *of itself*) must have been an act of *Providence*, including what is expressed by "the efficiency of grace." But when this last phrase is made to signify Divine energy, "quickening those who were dead in trespasses and sins," it resembles more an act of *creation* than the operation of Providence. But the *continued* support of *this* Divine life, as well as the other, must be a *providential* operation. As to give original existence and form is *creation*, so to continue that which exists already is the function of *Providence*, whatever be the object.

Speaking of intelligent creatures in a state of original probation, Mr Bennet very justly remarks, "It cannot be inferred from any sound principles of reason or justice, that the Divine Author of their being was any way obliged to deal with them in a way of *benevolence only*." Very true; for then they would not have failed in their allegiance. But if "benevolence only" was not *due* to them, it deserves our serious consideration *how much* benevolence was their due. This is not the place for discussing the question, and it has been considered in the Essay. One thing, however, may be observed, that I believe they were favoured with *more benevolence*, grace, and benignity, than Mr Bennet is willing to allow them. For I maintain that they had not only *objective* grace in its fullest conceivable extent, without any subduction, but also, while they stood, *efficacious influence*, by virtue of which they exercised all holy affections; whereas he only considers them "as originally possessing concreated principles of moral rectitude, *without any positive Divine influence* absolutely determining their proper exercise." Is not this to say in effect that there was *no more* benevolence shewn them than was their *creation-due?* Also, that in the *exercise* of their concreated holiness, while it lasted, they were supplied from some inexplicable *self-sufficiency?* This respectable author lays great stress on the circumstance, that no "Divine communication, which had been once imparted to the creature, was *withdrawn* or withheld, antecedently to the abuse of liberty." But is not such communication *for a season*, even during the whole term of rectitude, better than *none?* If no such influence was given *at all*, as he maintains, it is plain it was not *due* to them; and if they had determining influence for a season, it was the fruit of *pure benevolence*. Now, if it be a reflection on the Divine character to afford such influence *only for a season*, how much more so not to afford it *at all?* The fact is, that in *neither* case does

it imply any reflection on the Divine character; but, according to the sentiment of determining influence as a necessary predisposing cause of holy exercises, *more benevolence* is shewn than in the other case.

§ 17. However, our author is not accurate when he ascribes to my sentiments "a *sovereign* withholding of confirming grace from creatures in a state of moral probation," (p. 54;) for what I maintain is "an *equitable* withholding" of that grace which would have confirmed them. For sovereignty, which implies in my view of it a supreme right of exercising benevolence *ad extra*, has for its object exclusively the creature's *welfare*. Nor is he more accurate when he imputes to my creed "a *withdrawment* of *all* that influence which was the sole and exclusive cause of their holiness." I do not believe that there was *any* "withdrawment" as contradistinguished from "withholding." To *withdraw* properly implies an *aptitude to continue* in the thing withdrawn; or that it *would remain* were it not for the withdrawment, independently of his will who withdraws: thus water communicated to a reservoir, or money deposited in a bank. But benevolent influence leaves no such stock, which might remain, detached from the will which imparted it. Such influence may be compared rather to a fountain communicating a running stream; which *withdraws* no part of what has already flowed, when it *withholds* a future supply. Or it resembles a beam of light emitted by the sun, which is not capable of being *withdrawn*, though its continuance may be *withheld*. When used in a lax manner, the two terms may be taken interchangeably; as when we say, a person *withdraws* a stated contribution or a wonted favour; but the meaning evidently is, *withholds* the future, but not *recalls* the past. It is, as Turretine expresses it, "subtractio, non *privativa*, quum Deus gratiam antea datam tollit; sed NEGATIVA, quum non dat *novam* gratiam ad perstandum necessariam."

Nor is it at all essential to my argument that ALL sovereign influence (however equitable that would have been) was suspended or not exerted, at the commencement of moral evil; because not giving what would *in fact* overcome the temptation is all that it requires. As to what some have expressed by the term "creation-due," meaning original righteousness and holiness, to *withdraw* it was *impossible* from the nature of the case; for this was the very thing which they were to preserve, or not to preserve, as moral probationers. And indeed for God to *withdraw* it (were such a thing conceivable) would be the same as to discharge them from all *obligation to preserve it*.

Mr Bennet says, respecting the point wherein he *supposes* me to differ from the authors he quotes, "It is *one of the most objectionable* parts of Dr Williams's hypothesis respecting the origin of moral evil, that he introduceth a *withdrawment of all* that influence which was the

sole and exclusive cause of their holiness while they stood in uprightness, and thus antecedently to their abuse of liberty." I have already observed that his statement is not accurate; but as he lays so much stress on this point, it may be proper to shew that his *own* account of influence affords him no relief. For illustration, let his *own degree* of benevolent influence afforded to a perfect creature be represented by the number *seven*, let the force of temptation stand for *eight*, and his confirming grace not given stand for *nine*. It plainly follows that his *own degree* is not efficiently adequate any more than if *none* had been given. So that were I to maintain this last idea, (which I do not,) it would not be more infallibly connected with the event of transgression than what he himself maintains.

Mr Bennet seems to object to any sentiment which makes "God's act the *occasion* of the creature's sin;" but with what propriety it is difficult to guess. Does not this objection recoil upon himself? He maintains a "withholding of confirming grace;" and is not this the equitable *occasion* of transgression? And is not the greatest instance of benevolence that ever was conferred by the Almighty upon the world an *occasion* of aggravated transgression? The gift of His Son, and the preaching of the gospel, is a full proof of it.

§ 18. Aware, it seems, that the charge of making the creature *self-sufficient* would be brought against him, Mr Bennet contends for "a *derived dependent sufficiency* for what was required of them as moral agents, if duly exercised and improved." Sufficiency and insufficiency are very equivocal terms. Properly, to be derived and dependent are characters of *insufficiency;* but in a *comparative* sense, what is insufficient for one thing may be said to be sufficient for another thing. To be sufficient as an *efficient cause* is one thing; but to be sufficient for *moral agency* is another. Were not this the fact, there could be but one moral agent in the universe; for it is abundantly demonstrable that there is but one efficient positive cause. What is really *sufficient* to constitute moral agency and accountableness, I have shewn elsewhere; in my Notes on Edwards, and at the beginning of this work. To constitute *sufficiency*, in a proper sense, there should be the characters of underived and independent existence. When speaking of God's "*infinity* of moral excellence," our author adds, "The creature's inadequacy to *this*, therefore, is not strictly and properly to be viewed as an essential defect of his nature; otherwise every work of God had been necessarily imperfect." But is not this inference an important truth, reflecting the highest honour on Jehovah? Compared with him, is not every work of his *necessarily* imperfect? The truth is, there is a great difference between possessing a nature both *essentially* and *comparatively* defective; and possessing a nature defective as to *due* perfection. To possess the

former, is to be the subject of imperfect existence, which some call "metaphysical evil," and others "passive power;" and to possess the *latter*, is to be the subject of moral evil, or a defection from perfect virtue. And as it is the glory of Jehovah to be free from the former by *absolute necessity*, and as the removal of it from other beings is no *object* of choice; so it is His glory to *continue* or to *restore* the latter, namely *due* perfection of nature.

Most cordially, however, do I agree with my respectable opponent, that creatures possessed of due perfection "were under no positive influence *ab extra*, either from the decretive will of God, or from the effective energy of His providence, impelling them to any sinful volitions," (p. 30.) But when he speaks of their *conduct*, including the *goodness* of it, as "*self-determined*," I am constrained to dissent, for the reasons before adduced in my answers to Whitby and Fletcher. And when he speaks of their having nothing in *their nature* but what might "*with high probability* have terminated in their adherence to virtue and happiness;" it is but fair to ask, *Whose nature*, or from what *cause* was it, then, that they went *contrary* to this "high probability," and actually failed "in their adherence to virtue and happiness?" We agree that it was not from God; was it then from *chance?* Mr Bennet does not call in question "the eventual *certainty* of the creature's defection;" is *chance* then a cause of *certainty?* The truth is, that the absurdities and contradictions arising from a denial of the creature's passive power, both as to being and well-being, are endless. However, in the following statement we harmoniously accord, "that God's foreknowledge, simply considered, had not the least causal influence on the declination of the creature's mind from a state of perfect rectitude," (p. 33.) And yet there *was* a causal influence somewhere, yea, it was in the creature *himself;* and it is capable of innumerable *demonstrations*, (those I mean which are called *reductio ad absurdum*,) that nothing in a creature *could* have such causal influence but his *passive power* in connexion with his *free-will*.

§ 19. Before I conclude my remarks on Mr Bennet's "Thoughts," one thing more (which I have also hinted at in the Preface) may be noticed—viz., that there is a great distinction between the *modus* of sin's origination and the *cause* of it. This is probably one reason why the subject has been thought by many to be *incapable* of a satisfactory solution. But the difference is wide and essential. The *mode* of sin's origin must be collected from revealed data and probable inference only; it is not the subject of demonstrative evidence, properly speaking. Where the Scripture is silent, the argument, if we argue at all, must needs be, from the nature of the subject, only conjectural. And this, no doubt, is the chief reason why it is inferred by my respected

opponent and others, that an investigation of the subject, and even a convincing proof of it, if possible, is of no great use. On this point there is no ground of difference. The comparative importance of such a discovery would be small, though the result of the most laborious and successful inquiry. For what is the knowledge of the *manner* and circumstances of a fact, compared with the knowledge of its *cause*, any further than as the former might *assist* the latter? But when a *cause* of such radical importance is discovered, it opens to us a new scene, it exhibits to us wonderful truths as inseparably connected with it, truths of the greatest interest and the most beneficial nature, as I have endeavoured to shew in my "Conclusion." But what I wish may be particularly noticed is, that the *cause* or true origin of a fact may be capable of the strictest demonstration, while the *mode* of the same fact may remain in much obscurity. And this I maintain is the case as to the fact of sin's origination. It would be easy to illustrate this remark as to other subjects. For instance, the *manner* of Divine holy influence on the mind, and of providential sustentation of our being and well-being, must be collected from Sacred Writ, and probable inference from revealed *data*, and after all the subject may remain in much obscurity; but the *cause* of these important facts is capable of *demonstrative* evidence. Hence our Lord's remark to Nicodemus, that the *mode* of the Spirit's operation on the mind may remain obscure, while the cause is decidedly Divine influence. From the *effects* we may demonstrate the cause, though not the manner. Again, the *modus* of the world's *formation* must be gathered from revealed *data* and probable conjecture, and after all our conjectures, a veil of impenetrable difficulty may continue over it; and therefore to bestow much time and pains upon the investigation is not a mark of true wisdom, any further than as it contributes to discover the cause. And yet who, except atheists and sceptics, can question that the *true cause* of the world's formation is capable of metaphysical demonstration? that is, the greatest certainty conceivable, and of which mathematical evidence itself is but a branch. I hope my learned and respected opponent will consider my remarks with candour, and rest assured of my friendly regards.

§ 20. The next author who has thought proper to attack my argument for the origin of moral evil being found *exclusively in ourselves*, and not at all in our Maker, was the Rev. WILLIAM PARRY, in what he denominates, "Strictures on the Origin of Moral Evil," &c. This learned and respectable gentleman also has my grateful acknowledgments for professions of respect; but his manner of treating the subject is at least equally exceptionable with that of Mr Bennet, and in

some respects much more so. As the "Strictures" were not addressed to me, any more than to the public at large, they were open to observation from any person who should think proper to reply. This is now done by the Rev. Thomas Hill, in his "Animadversions" lately published. While due candour and decorum are preserved in the discussion, I hope that religion and moral science will be advanced by it; and especially that the *true ground* of the acknowledged axioms, "All good is from God," and "All moral evil is from ourselves," will become more familiar to the thoughtful and devout Christian.

§ 21. Another publication which has echoed the popular cry, that the subject is inscrutable, and not much calculated for the purposes of practical godliness, is the *Theological Review*. The anonymous critic displays some candour, and gives conciliating expressions of respect, in his opposition to my sentiments, while reviewing Mr Bennet's "Remarks," Mr Parry's "Strictures," and Mr Gilbert's "Reply" to Mr Bennet.* Observing in the first of these critiques some *wrong statements* of my views, I thought it but justice to myself and to what I deem to be important truth, to take some notice of them by writing to the Editor of that work, through the medium of the Publisher; and as representations equally unfair and injurious were *repeated*, I renewed my remonstrances. Some of these were candidly inserted, but the last letter was suppressed. As the material parts of the *whole* of them will not occupy much room, as they may cast some additional light on my real sentiments, and as my friends may wish to see them all at one view, I regard them as a suitable close to this Appendix.

§ 22. Letter I.:—Sir, The Reviewer of "Remarks on a Recent Hypothesis respecting the Origin of Moral Evil," &c., has conveyed some ideas to the public which want to be rectified. When he says that I am "an advocate for *many* of those doctrines which are generally called Calvinistic," it might be inferred that I hold *some* doctrines which are not so denominated. I am not conscious of holding *any* which are inconsistent with the doctrinal articles of the Church of England, or that beautiful summary of Christian doctrines, the shorter Assembly's Catechism. The Reviewer asserts that I "differ from Calvinists respecting the origin of moral evil." This is not accurate; I agree with the major part of authors who are so termed, *as far as they go;* particularly Turretine, Witsius, Stapferus, Owen, Goodwin, Howe, Edwards, &c. &c. Many Calvinists have indeed thrown out hints, with a "perhaps," that "this is a problem, all the difficulties of which will never be removed in the present state," as the Reviewer has

* In the Numbers for February, May, and June, 1808.

done ; but surely, while I establish no principles, and assume no *data*, but what all consistent Calvinists admit, this ground is too slight to support his assertion. To point out the wrong inferences that some draw from their own premises, and to establish legitimate conclusions, cannot with the least accuracy or propriety be termed a difference with regard to *doctrine*. It is no part of my present design to expose the mistakes into which Mr Bennet has fallen in his Letters addressed to me, through an entire misconception of my *terms*, and consequently of my arguments ; but I must entreat your indulgence to a few strictures on the conduct of the Reviewer in introducing a quotation from Dr Owen, as if inconsistent with my sentiments. The Doctor's argument is forcible against the following doctrine of Arminius, "*Inclinatio ad peccandum ante lapsum in homine fuit, licet non ita vehemens ac inordinata ut nunc est ;*" and which is conveyed in different words by Corvinus. But I deny that anything maintained or ever published by me is either consistent with what Arminius held, or inconsistent with Dr Owen's doctrine implied in the quotation. There is indeed a similarity of *sound*, but not of *sense*, between some of my terms and those on which Dr Owen animadverts. The reasoning is conclusive against a voluntary, a physical, or a concreated *inclination ;* but not so against hypothetical *certainty*, a metaphysical *tendency*, or a deficient *cause* of mutability. What I contend for is, that defectibility *itself* does not arise from chance, but from an assignable cause, as well as indefectibility. On that assignation is established a fair solution, or what I have ventured to call a demonstration of the problem, *Whence comes moral evil ?* I fully acquiesce in the sentiment of the Reviewer, that "the origin of evil is a subject which ought never to be conversed about in a light and thoughtless manner," &c. ; but can by no means allow that it ought to be viewed, as insinuated by some, in any other light than what is highly interesting to the cause of godliness and real virtue. In my view, the *true solution* of the question includes the very essence of *self-knowledge*, *humility*, and *gratitude*.

On the whole, the Reviewer seems not to comprehend the nature of my argument and the real ideas contained in the terms I have employed. —By inserting these remarks in your next number, you will oblige, Sir, your most obedient, E. Williams.

Rotherham, *Feb.* 11, 1808.

§ 23. Letter II. :—Sir, The Reviewer, in reply to my observation, "that I was not conscious of holding *any* doctrines inconsistent with the Assembly's Catechism," &c., brings forward two specific charges, in evidence of my having abandoned *some* Calvinistic doctrines.

The first is, "That man, in his state of innocence, possessed such a

universal rectitude of all the faculties of the soul, as to have no tendency of *any* kind to evil; and that while he continued in that state, he was able to perform all the duties which were required of him." On this charge, I beg leave to make a few remarks. (1.) This proposition is so worded as to include something which *all* consistent Calvinists hold, and something which *none* of them do. The truth of this remark I hope to substantiate in what follows. (2.) I firmly believe with all Calvinists, "that man in his state of innocence possessed *universal rectitude* of all the faculties of the soul." For the Divine record testifies that man was made "in the image of God;" or, as the same record explains it, "in righteousness and true holiness." And this, I apprehend, includes that he was perfectly *sinless;* that he had no *sinful* bias, bent, inclination, or tendency whatever. He was *made* upright; his righteousness and holiness were *concreated* with him; not *first* made a creature, and *afterwards* made holy. He knew God and himself clearly; loved God with all his heart, and every other lovely object for His sake; and was therefore profoundly humble, warmly grateful, and promptly obedient. (3.) I believe with all consistent Calvinists, "that whilst he continued in that state he was *able* to perform *all* the duties which were required of him," in their explained sense of *ability.* No one, without impiety, much less a consistent Calvinist, can say that man was *independently* able. He was able with Divine assistance, by participation. To ascribe to him ability beyond this, is to fix him on an equal throne with Him whose name is Jehovah. He had the *ability* of choosing the objects which appeared in his view the best for him; of adopting without any *foreign constraint* the means of his own happiness. But as man's ability was *derived*, it needed support. Therefore, (4.) the Reviewer is under a great mistake in supposing man "to have no tendency of *any* kind to evil" to be a Calvinistic doctrine. Where is an author to be found, British or foreign, owned as a brother by the denomination in question, who maintains that Adam's ability to act well was *unsupported* by a cause distinct from, and infinitely above him? But if there was not a tendency of *some* kind, what need was there of *support?* The ideas of support without need, or of need without *any* tendency, are perfectly incompatible.

Some indeed have attempted an objection to this most important branch of Calvinistic doctrine, by making a difference between a support of our *physical* powers and of a good disposition. They who admit the former, but deny the latter, are as remote from Calvinism as they are from Scripture and reason. Was not a "good disposition," concreated with man, a part of his *physical* existence? From the manner in which some people talk of *physical powers*, and *moral powers*, they

afford great room to suspect that they "know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm." Is not *every* power of the soul a *physical* power? If any power could deserve the name of *moral*, it would be the *will;* but is it not obvious that the will is only a physical power, though capable of producing *moral effects?* The supposition that the soul has *two sets* of powers, the one physical and the other moral, has no foundation in truth. In a less accurate sense, indeed, the *state of the mind* has been called *moral*, when only considered as good *antecedent* to all acts; but if we consult the truth of *ideas*, *morality* is the *manner* of action. The action, abstracted from the manner, has no moral quality. But because an action is called *good* when conformable to rectitude, and *good* also (or a degree of happiness) is the result of a right *manner* of choosing, hence many confound antecedent *goodness* and *morality*. The poverty of language, also, betrays men into an error when they want to contrast physical goodness, in the common acceptation of the term, with that state of mind which is inseparably connected with right volitions. Hence, for the want of due consideration, has an outcry been made against a phrase I have used, in accounting for the origin of evil—"a tendency to defection morally considered." The nature of the argument shews that I was speaking of a tendency *antecedent* to choice; and therefore it could not possibly have a *moral* character. When I say "morally considered," who but those who seek occasion to excite popular prejudice would suppose that I could mean anything else than to characterise the kind of *defection*, and not the kind of *tendency*, by these words? Annihilation being one *kind* of defection, and moral evil another, what I designed to assert is, that man had need of support in BOTH respects; that he could no more be *self-sufficient* in the one case than in the other.

Much has been said about *moral* ability and inability; but in my view the term *moral* thus connected is not well adapted to convey the ideas designed. For if moral *ability* be made to express a good *antecedent* state of the mind, and if morality be the *manner* in which the will attaches itself to an object of choice, that ability, however excellent, cannot, in strictness, be called *moral*, except as the effect of a former choice. The same distinction is applicable to moral *inability*. An antecedent state of the mind can be termed "*moral* inability" only as it is the effect of a perverted choice; but that kind of inability which is antecedent to *all* choice cannot be *moral*. Hence, a tendency to evil in a perfect nature *cannot* be a *morally evil tendency*. These remarks have been occasioned by the Reviewer's questions, "Wherein, we ask, does this tendency to moral evil differ from a *bias* to sin?" "Is not a tendency to moral evil an anomy, and so *a thing sinful?*" What I believe and assert is, that man, in the most perfect state con-

ceivable, needed *support* for the *goodness* of his disposition, concreated with him, no less than for his existence. To suppose him supported as to his being, but not as to his goodness, in order to secure a happy result of his moral acts, is both anti-scriptural and irrational; and in fact is nothing but the old Pelagian heresy, so often and so successfully refuted. And if his *good disposition* required *support*, what would be the consequence, if God thought it right not to afford it, beyond a certain degree, in the hour of temptation? As a *motive* was proposed by the tempter, and man's good disposition was such only while supported; and as that support could be only in the way of *benevolent influence* antecedent to all choice; there remains no assignable reason why the support by such influence should be stronger or weaker than the temptation, why Adam should be victorious or vanquished, but the *sovereign pleasure of God.* If God was *obligated*, on any consideration whatever, to support him from yielding to the tempter, He would have *done* it; but He *did not;* therefore his fall was equally *certain* and *equitable.* With God, *fact* and *right* coincide.

Words are very imperfect vehicles of thought, however well chosen, when we want to express anything out of the familiar routine of ideas; but when words are defined, and definitions are given in different words and forms, all concurring to express the same idea, and when words capable of different interpretations are limited by the nature of the subject, it seems a peculiar infelicity that no explanation succeeds. How could the Reviewer, or any candid, intelligent person confound my use of the words "tendency to defection" with a "sinful tendency," or with anything inconsistent with Calvinism? I confess it is inconsistent with the latitudinarian *self-sovereignty* of the will, *uninfluenced* by the previous state of the mind in its elections; and the *self-sufficiency* of man to preserve his rectitude. Let any one come fairly forward, and own God's absolute sovereignty in preserving, as well as in imparting the *goodness* of all creatures, and that Divine *favour alone* is the cause of their continued goodness; or, which amounts to the same thing in idea, let him own the *absolute dependence* (in a passive sense) of a perfect creature for his goodness on the sovereign pleasure of God; and I can easily overlook all smaller differences. The truth is, that many wish to be thought Calvinists, while they deny this fundamental and most important principle of the denomination. The view I hold of the origin of sin brings the creature too low, exalts grace too high, and stands too closely connected with predestination to life, to be relished by those who call themselves "*moderate* Calvinists." Nor can it be relished by the mere philosophical Necessitarians, who ascribe good and evil *alike* to God, and thereby, in effect, deny the very existence of a moral system, and the distinctive characters of sin and holiness, virtue and

vice. But I am fully persuaded, the more the sentiment here stated is fairly examined and fully understood, the more will it appear that the life and soul of true *experimental godliness* is involved in it.—I remain, Sir, your most obedient, E. WILLIAMS.

ROTHERHAM, *March* 10, 1808.

§ 24. LETTER III.:—Sir, The other charge adduced by the Reviewer is, that I renounce the following Calvinistic doctrine:—"That the Divine purpose or plan comprehends all events." This doctrine, however, I believe in the fullest sense, and sincerely rejoice in it. I believe there is no *act* whatever of a free agent, past, present, or to come, which is not comprehended in the Divine purpose. But it is the peculiar advantage of the sentiment I defend, to do this without ascribing to God the *sinfulness* of those acts. This is what all consistent Calvinists are solicitous to maintain; and when the Assembly of Divines state, that God has "foreordained whatsoever comes to pass," all judicious expositors of their meaning carefully observe this distinction. All acts are worthy of the Divine concurrence, and therefore of the Divine purpose; but it is utterly abhorrent from Scripture, reason, and piety, to say that He has purposed the sinfulness of *any* act, though that also is under His absolute control, and from eternity foreseen in its deficient cause. Besides, the Assembly explain their doctrine, when they say, "Our first parents being *left* to the *freedom* of their own will, sinned:" words without meaning if God purposed the *sinfulness* of the acts of free agents. The moral evil which attaches to any act is *equitably permitted*, though it might have been *sovereignly prevented;* and is thus permitted for the glorious and everlasting display of justice and of mercy.

The quotations from Dr Owen and Mr Gale, so far from *opposing* my statement, plainly express it *as far as they go.* I fully believe with Dr Owen that "nature and grace before the fall complied in a sweet union and harmony in the way of obedience." Man then had a steady VOLUNTARY *tendency* to all that was right and good; yet, neither Dr Owen nor any other consistent Calvinist maintains, that either man or angel was not LIABLE to evil of two kinds—*annihilation* and *defection.* To a perfect moral agent annihilation would be a great *evil;* and yet if there were no LIABILITY, no hypothetical *tendency* to this evil, he could need no *support*, no *preservation* in being. Again, that perfect man was LIABLE to *moral defection*, is sufficiently evidenced by the *mere fact* of his actual defection. He sinned, and was therefore *liable* to sin; nor could he be thus liable without some *cause* of it. This cause must be either in God or in *himself.* If in God, it must be from His decree, and whatever He decreed He *effects.* Now to effect anything

by an act of the *will* (implied in decree) is to be the *author* of that thing. For the will of God to be in the *wrong manner* of the act, is to make God the *author* of the vitiosity and blameworthiness, as well as of the physical part of the act. From such premises the irresistible inference would be, that, no moral alternative being left, man's *freedom* would be destroyed, and the necessitated sin must attach to HIM whose will was *most free* in the defection of the choice. Moreover, if the cause of *liability* to evil be in MAN, it must be in him either as a positive or negative cause. Not *positive*, for that would destroy his moral alternative, his freedom and accountability,—would make God the impelling agent, and man only His *mere instrument*, in the *evil* of his deeds. God being the author of our active nature, if His predetermining influence be no more in the goodness of volitions than in the evil of them, he would be as much the source of evil as of good,—a notion which no pious mind can admit, and which is replete with contradictions.

The cause of liability to sin in man is therefore *negative;* and must needs be the *state* of his mind considered as *absolutely dependent* for his determining goodness on that Being who alone is self-existent, independent, and all-sufficient. This liability to defection, arising from our *deficient* nature alone, I have called, (and every consistent Calvinist may safely call it,) in a metaphysical sense, a *tendency* to defection; and I will venture to say that the denial of it is attended with manifest absurdity. It is allowed that man did *actually sin;* now if this took place without *any* tendency, then here is an effect without a cause. To say that it sprung from *free-will*, unconnected with and uninfluenced by the *deficient* cause before mentioned, would be to make God the author and *primary* agent in moral evil; for He being the author of the *active* power, and His concourse and energy alone supporting and directing the physical part of every action, it would follow irrefragably that God would be the moral agent in the evil. Where the *manner* of the act, as well as the act itself, is of Divine positive appointment and causation, *morality* in the creature is excluded; and moral good and evil are but names without signification. On the other hand, let that deficient passive cause, which is implied in every dependent nature, be taken into the account, and we have an *adequate* cause to produce the effect; a *cause* which, though negative, is an infallible ground of certainty and prescience. Were the true cause of the first perversion of choice of an active nature, it could be traced from man up to God; but being passive and negative, it cannot possibly have a higher origin than contingent or dependent existence.

With whatever important truth of Divine revelation we connect the

present view of SIN and its ORIGIN, it will be uniformly found a doctrine according to *godliness*. Through this medium we see the full extent of these edifying truths—"All good is from God alone," and "All evil is from ourselves alone"—truths of radical importance in *every Christian's experience*. Enabled, through sovereign grace, to exercise faith on the Divine testimony, to receive the Saviour as held forth in the gospel, and walk in Him with loving and grateful obedience, we are further invited, by a just view of the origin of moral evil, to a most interesting and profitable acquaintance with the ineffable glories of the *Divine character*. In the plan of salvation revealed in the gospel, in each particular doctrine, in God's covenant and His dispensations, in the grounds of moral obligation, and the nature of penal sanctions, we behold an additional beauty. We may see how the several parts of true *moral science* harmoniously accord with evangelical truth; we have a radical principle by means of which to detect and expose innumerable *heretical errors*, and advantageously to establish every truth of the gospel; and particularly we more clearly behold the *nature* of *sin*, and of equitable *suffering* as the effect of sin. By such contemplations every Christian temper is invigorated; and the necessity of a simple, humble dependence on God, in the way of His appointment, appears with brighter evidence. The life of faith becomes doubly important; while self-knowledge, humility, profound reverence, and the most unreserved resignation of our all into the custody and protection of the infinitely amiable Jehovah, through time and eternity, are abundantly encouraged and advanced.—I am, Sir, yours,

E. WILLIAMS.

ROTHERHAM, *April* 8, 1808.

§ 25. LETTER IV. :—Sir, I did not intend to trouble you any more in this way; but the same reason still existing in your last number, (for May,) I am constrained to solicit your insertion of a few lines. My design is not to vindicate my sentiments or modes of expression, but to undeceive your readers by substituting my *real* sentiments, instead of what the Reviewer, after Mr Parry, "thinks" to be mine. The first charge, indeed, is of less moment than some others, but as it tends to excite prejudice, (which I do not say was *designed* by the Reviewer,) it is of some importance.

When speaking of Calvin, Turretine, Witsius, and Gale, he adds, "We regret that Dr Williams has *abandoned* their luminous language." This is not the fact; for when these writers, or any others, use appropriate language, I am not conscious that I ever use a different "dialect" in expressing the *same* ideas. If indeed it be unlawful to

acquire and express any *new* ideas, to depart from their "luminous language" is matter of regret; but to use their words, precisely in their sense, when ideas are *different*, would be a mode of improving science equally novel and censurable.

The Reviewer says, "We *think* that it is the *opinion* of Dr Williams that holiness is not due to a creature as a creature, but after having entered on a state of probation." This is *not* my opinion, in the objectionable sense of this representation; though in one sense it is mine, as it must be that of every person of reflection, and the Reviewer himself of course. An apostate angel is a creature; and if holiness is due to a creature "*as a creature*," it must be due to *him*; which is absurd. But the connexion shews that the Reviewer intends a creature *at the moment of creation*. But so far am I from supposing "that if God dealt with them in strict equity, the whole intelligent creation would have been *created* destitute of holiness, and therefore miserable," that I think the very reverse to be the truth, and that the supposition appears neither scriptural nor consistent with just views of either equity or sovereignty. To make an intelligent, accountable, immortal creature miserable without his own fault, would in my view be inconsistent with moral government, and no part of supreme dominion.

The Reviewer seems to confound my use of the term "inevitable" as to *argument*, and "inevitable" as to *choice*. Surely a *consequence* may be properly expressed by the words inevitable, unavoidable, certain, necessary, infallible, or any others expressing a connexion that exists between that consequence and an antecedent, however evitable or avoidable the consequence might have been with respect to the *manner* of the choice itself, as perfectly free, IF the agent pleased. Though Adam did not sin *against* his will, but *by* its exercise, yet this is no good reason why any term whatever, expressive of the strongest connexion between the antecedent and its consequence, may not be used.

E. WILLIAMS.

May 20, 1808.

The above letter not appearing in the Number for June, I was given to understand, that if I had any further communication to make, on a review contained in that Number of "Mr Gilbert's Reply to Mr Bennet," both would probably be inserted in the next. Accordingly I sent to the publisher the following remarks as a continuation of the former, but the insertion was declined. It is therefore here given as—

§ 26. LETTER V.:—Sir, In your 6th Number, for June, the Reviewer asks, whether passive power ought to be called a "natural evil?" The term "natural," in that connexion, is used according to the common

distribution of evils, as either *moral* or *natural*,—that is, any evil which is *not moral*,—and not according to the more philosophical distribution of evils into *physical*, *moral*, and *metaphysical*. But in strictness, passive power is *metaphysical* evil; as frequently used by foreign philosophers and divines. But the Reviewer asks, "Is it an evil, in any sense, for a creature not to be God?" That it is an *evil*, in a *comparative* sense, is as true as that to possess being without it is a *good*. By English authors, it is called the evil of *imperfection*, and the evil of *imperfect existence;* and as its opposite requires praise, so this demands self-abasement. It is again asked, "Can a holy God create an unholy creature?" No. "Or can He, by ceasing to support its holiness, reduce a creature which has never sinned to a state of unholiness?" In this question, several things are blended, which ought to be kept separate. It consists of three parts:—1. Is it worthy of God to reduce a creature to a state of unholiness? No. 2. Can a creature, which has never sinned, be reduced to unholiness, by any other way than by a voluntary act? No. 3. Is the ceasing to support its holiness the cause why a creature sins? No. What then is the cause? Its *passive power* and *free-will*. And no surer does a right line, terminating on another right line, form an angle, than the union of these, without sovereign grace, generates *moral imperfection*. Hence the supposition blended with the Reviewer's question, that "ceasing to support" would be the *cause* of "reducing a creature to a state of unholiness," even without its own fault, implies a total misconception of my sentiments.

The Reviewer again states, "Support may be admitted, and yet tendency may be denied." Yes, it may be denied; but not with truth and evidence. The appeal is made to common sense, whether support be *needed*, where there is no tendency to a different state? Let common sense decide. But another question, connected with an erroneous view of my sentiments, is, "Whether the Divine Being, if a holy creature never offended Him, could, consistently with His moral perfections, *cease to conserve* its holiness?" If "ceasing to conserve its holiness" mean anything different from *permitting it to sin*, the meaning is beyond my present ken. I suppose that this *is* the sense. But is it *good* sense? The question, in fact, is this: Could the Divine Being *permit* a holy creature to sin, "if this holy creature never offended Him?" It seems, then, that a creature first *sins*, before he is *permitted* to sin! The Reviewer proposes an amendment of my phrase "tendency to moral defection," by another—viz., "tendency to want of holiness prior to the first sin." Had he comprehended my meaning, he could never have made such a proposal;—I was going to say, had he comprehended his own meaning. "Want of holiness prior to the first sin!" Does any one comprehend it? Is it comprehensible?

But "tendency to moral defection" is not liable to such inconsistency. Moral defection is an *effect* of some *cause;* and that cause, be it what it may, if common sense may judge, has a *tendency* to produce that effect. The Reviewer evidently has not yet divested himself of the false notion, that all tendency must possess a *physical* character, and therefore is ultimately reducible to the Divine will. Until, however, he can rise superior to this prejudice, he is not qualified to investigate the origin of evil. He attempts a solution of the difficulty thus:—"In the hour of combat, Adam possessed all the holiness and wisdom which were concreated with him; but they were finite, and external temptation, being mightier than they, prevailed: Adam, in consequence, voluntarily sinned." If this can satisfy any, as a solution of the problem, I do not envy them their satisfaction. I am satisfied with it too, as a *truism;* but does it fairly meet the question, What was the true *cause* why temptation *prevailed?* To say that Adam's holiness and wisdom were *finite* is no sufficient reason; for so they were during the time he stood, and so they are now. What inconsistency is there between being *finite* and being *morally perfect?* There are, I believe, but two things conceivable by which Adam could be influenced, exclusive of the external object and his free-will: the one, concreated holiness; the other, his passive power. Without his free-will, he could not sin. Now, which of these two principles contributed to his wrong choice? Was it concreated holiness? Absurd. Or was it passive power? Yes. That is, turn the subject which way you please, and view it in whatever light, it still appears that the true origin of moral evil is *passive power united with liberty;* or, *liberty under the influence of passive power.* In other words, the reason why the free-will of a perfect creature chose morally wrong was, the influence of passive power. And I will venture to say, that every other attempt of solving the awful problem is fairly reducible to an absurdity. Had the Reviewer understood me and Turretine, he could not have put this question: Is not the passage out of Turretine "in direct opposition to Dr Williams's hypothesis?" No. It is perfectly consistent, *as far as it goes.* Turretine properly states, that "*new* grace, necessary for his support, was not given" to Adam. But neither this nor anything else advanced by that valuable writer fairly meets the question, *Why* did this *desertion* terminate in sin? No desertion conceivable could be the *cause* of sin. For had Adam been *totally* deserted, this could not have constituted him a sinner without his free choice. To make an act of desertion, however total, to influence Adam's wrong choice, rather than his own passive power, is to confound *cause* and *occasion.* By the by, the Reviewer understands Turretine to mean, that Adam *lost* CONFIRMING grace! However accurate Turretine's distinc-

tions might be,—*potentia non peccandi* and *efficax gratia*,—and I do not dispute their accuracy, they leave the *immediate* cause of sin untouched.

I had asserted, while stating the respective causes of sin and holiness, "that the will, in the exercise of its freedom, when producing moral effects, is the instrument of the disposition; and that the character of the effect bears an infallible and exact proportion to that of the predisposing cause;" that is, a disposition under *more or less* benevolent influence, in the exercise of free volition, produces *more or less* holiness, in an infallible and exact proportion; and that the disposition which is *more or less* under the influence of passive power, is *more or less* the cause of sin, in a similar proportion. Here are two *causes*, and also two *effects*, of different *characters*, exactly corresponding and proportionate. Benevolent influence cannot be the cause of sin, nor can passive power be the cause of holiness, in any measure; but the contrary is true in the exactest degree. What then can more plainly express the sentiment than the words I have employed, "that the character of the effect," as either sin or holiness, "bears an infallible and exact proportion to that of the predisposing cause," as either benevolent influence in the disposition, or passive power? But who, possessing candour and discernment, would infer thence, that my statement implies a *similarity* of *moral* character between *sin* and the *cause* of sin? May there not be an *exact proportion* between *sin* and its *cause*, without that cause being *sinful?* Or who would ingraft on my words the absurd sentiment, that, because the *character* of the *effect* is moral evil, and because there is an infallible and exact *proportion* between the character of an effect and its cause, therefore the character of the *cause* of moral evil is *moral evil!* I had also asserted, that "a *suspension* of sovereign, holy influence, towards a moral agent, is to deal with him in *mere equity;*" and, on another [occasion,] "that then alone can moral agents fall into sin, when dealt with in *pure equity.*" Here the Reviewer fancies a contradiction between my assertions and Mr Gilbert's statement of them; but it is nothing more than fancy. For any one who chooses may see that "mere equity" and "pure equity" are, in their respective connexions, very different ideas. The former expresses the supposed *absence* of sovereign benevolence towards a moral agent; the latter, the comparative *influence* of equity and sovereignty when combined. They therefore are a direct answer to these very different questions: What may we call that perfection of the Divine nature which is exercised towards a moral agent, when sovereign benevolence is supposed to be *absent? Mere equity.* When equity and sovereignty are exercised, in any supposed proportion, towards a moral agent, and he falls into sin by his abuse of liberty,

which of them is concerned in the affair,—equity alone, sovereignty alone, or both combined? *Pure equity—only equity.* If needful, it would be easy to illustrate my meaning from objects in nature. Were I speaking of the *quantity* of matter, to the *exclusion* of magnitude, the subject of the definition would be "*mere* quantity of matter." But were I to speak of the quantity of matter and of magnitude in a combined form, and which of the two had an influence on gravitation, I might say, "quantity of matter *only.*" Again, were I speaking of *vital air*, to the exclusion of all other air, the subject of my definition would be "*mere* vital air." But were the inquiry respecting different airs combined, and which of them respectively had an influence in promoting combustion, the answer might be, "vital air *only;*" or, "it was *purely* vital air."

How any one could suspect, from my Sermon on Predestination, or from anything I have written, that I did not acknowledge the Divine *purpose* to comprehend all *events*, is to me a mystery, except *sin*, or the *sinfulness* of acts, be included in the term "events." But the idea of God *purposing* the *sinfulness*, the obliquity, the moral pravity of the act, is what my soul abhors, as the first-born of heresies; as what, in its just consequences, is demonstrably subversive of all religion and morality. The Reviewer, speaking of human volitions, asserts, "if they are foreknown, they must be included in the Divine purpose." But though all human volitions are included in the Divine purpose, the mere fact of their being *foreknown* is no sufficient proof of it; for the *sinfulness* of an act is foreknown; is it therefore *purposed?* He adds, "everything which has a beginning is an effect of a pre-existing cause, and effects must flow from the Divine will foreordaining them." Does the *sinfulness* of human volitions, then, "flow from the Divine will?" But there is another exception. Passive power has a beginning no less than the sinfulness of actions; but does it flow from the *Divine will?* Prior to created existence it could have no place; nor could a creature exist without it. Therefore it does not follow that what does not flow from the First Cause "must be necessary and eternal." Nor is it true, that "there is no *necessity* without Divine *foreordination.*" He who does not comprehend the falsity of that assumed idea does not comprehend the true origin of evil. To maintain "the Divine precourse or premotion of human actions, and the foreordination of them" as actions, is one thing; but to maintain the *foreordination* of the *moral evil* of those actions is another. The former I believe, with all consistent Calvinists; the latter I deny, as an error equally unphilosophical, unscriptural, and impious. But he who rejects *the origin of moral evil* as before stated, cannot hold this distinction without virtually contradicting himself. I had said, that "the moral evil which attaches to

any act is equitably *permitted.*" From this the Reviewer infers that it was *purposed.* But the inference is not just; for *permission* cannot imply *purpose,* except on the false assumption that passive power is *not* the true cause of the *perversion* of a free act. Allow this cause, and to *purpose* the *permission* of sin appears at once a contradictory idea, adopted for the sake of avoiding a more obvious absurdity, that is, a direct, voluntary, and eternal necessitation of moral evil. But the idea is a mere subterfuge, for want of an open and fair solution of this infinitely interesting and tremendous phenomenon. — I remain, Sir, yours, &c. E. WILLIAMS.

ROTHERHAM, *June* 14, 1808.

§ 27. [A letter to the Rev. GEORGE PAYNE, of Hull, but subsequently [LL.D., and] President of the Western College, Plymouth. The nature of Dr Payne's communication to Dr Williams is sufficiently apparent from this reply; it is inserted, however, in Mr Pyer's Memoir of Dr Payne, prefixed to "Lectures on Christian Theology," vol. i., p. xxxiv. —ED.]:—

MY DEAR SIR,—I thank you for your remarks on some part of my Essay, and for the opportunity of answering your inquiries. But before I proceed to these replies, allow me to notice your observation on "the entrance of moral evil." You acknowledge that you have not thought of it with that closeness which might justify your objection. This indeed is a candid, but also a needed apology. For, to "justify" an inference that my principles "affect human culpability," or, which is the same thing, that man is not *criminal, because* the origin of moral evil is in *himself* exclusively, is out of the power of reason. If sin originated in *any other* way besides what I have stated, for man to be accountable *at all* would be strange indeed. That is, it would originate ultimately in God, the author of our created nature, (supposing a denial of a negative principle by which that created nature is capable of being perverted,) and yet must be punished as if it were not from Him! It would be to *hate* and *punish* the fruit of His own appointment! Is there any conceivable *active power* but from God? And if there were *no other* origin of sin, it must plainly be God's offspring! In short, the more my principles are *examined* and understood, the more clearly it must appear (as I am constrained to think) that they are demonstrably founded in the eternal nature of things, and that no adverse principles are *compatible with a moral system.*

I. You inquire, whether by the term "subjective grace" I meant some *effect* produced upon the mind, or that *Divine influence* which is employed in its production? I know not how to make my meaning plainer than by the [following] definition:—"It is the *immediate*

effect of sovereign will *in* the soul." I do not suppose that *influence* and the *effect* of it are convertible terms. Yet the *same thing* may be expressed by either of them, under different relations. As proceeding from God, it is *influence* or energy; but as existing in the mind, it is an effect, a nature, a quality, &c. Thus a ray of light proceeding from the sun is an *influence*, but as existing in the eye or a transparent body, it is an *effect*. Had you attended to this necessary distinction, probably all embarrassment about such terms would have been prevented. The "subjective grace" for which I plead, as proceeding from God, is a sovereign gracious energy; but its existence in the soul is the immediate effect. And this is properly called a *holy state* of the mind, because from it alone *proceed* holy thoughts, affections, and actions. It is "a new *heart*," or a "right spirit," as the fountain of all acceptable *exercises*. When I state thus, "the other *cause*, consisting in the Holy Spirit's *immediate energy*," it is obvious that "immediate energy" is the *cause* of that *effect*, which I have defined as "subjective grace." It is therefore a mistake in you to identify *cause* and *subjective* grace, in the manner you have done, as if it were the true import of my language. You suggest the substitution of the word "favour" for "grace," in some texts produced; but this question would still return, What *kind* of *favour* is intended? But you also suggest the propriety of considering the term *favour* as "expressive of that gracious energy or influence upon which believers are daily dependent." Is not this the very thing for which I plead? Subjective grace, as coming from God, (like light from the sun, or a stream from a fountain,) is "a gracious energy or influence;" and upon this "believers are daily dependent," as a reservoir is dependent on a spring, or an enlightened body (as the moon) on the light of the sun. You ask, How can the term "grace" in this passage, "My grace is sufficient for thee," mean *a holy state of mind?* And you object, that this is not the grace of *Christ*, but of the individual who possesses it. But surely that grace which is from *Christ* as its fountain may properly be called *His* grace. He is full of grace; and out of His fulness we receive grace. "My grace," that which I have to impart, and of which thou shalt be possessed, "is sufficient for thee." If this promised grace was not to be *possessed* as a principle in the soul, how could it be *sufficient?* An energy or influence from *Christ*, without any *effect* answerable to what I have termed *subjective grace*, is an idea which I apprehend has no archetype.

II. You inquire, "If this be an *effect* upon the mind, what is its precise *nature*, and wherein it consists?" I think this is done already in the Essay, and implied in what has been now stated. But I will endeavour to explain it by other terms and illustrations. It is "the

life of God in the soul of man," as Burnet and Scougal express it. Or, it is the immediate effect of the Spirit of Christ in the soul, as the source of all spiritual exercises, whether of the understanding, will, or affections. As fallen man has *a sinful nature* previous to the *sinful actions* of his life, from whence these proceed, and from which objective temptations have success; so a man savingly renewed has a *gracious nature* previous to any *gracious acts*. It is that immediate effect of Divine influence, or the Holy Spirit, in the soul, which enables it to understand the truth, to believe, to love, to fear, to obey, &c.; and without which these things could never follow. However difficult it may be to make another understand what we mean precisely even by *animal life*, we are sufficiently convinced of its existence from its effects, and we also know whence it comes. So in the other case, the vivifying influence *finds* the soul in a state of unbelief, but does not leave it there. It finds the sinner blind and stupid, at enmity with God, and in love with sin, or an unconverted character; but makes him willing in the day of God's power; it enlightens, quickens, and renovates the mind; it slays the enmity, and *enables* the man to *understand* the Scriptures, to *know* God and Jesus Christ, to love the Lord, and to tremble at His word. You ask, "Upon what power of the mind is it produced?" I answer on *every* power. We might as well ask, On what member of the body is animal life produced? Natural life, indeed, is coeval with our members; and so was the spiritual life coeval with the human faculties; but by sin a spiritual death took place, and the lost life is restored by an immediate act of sovereign favour, in order to render any means (as Divine truth, &c.) efficacious and saving.

You ask, "Have you not explained it by *terms* which denote effects attributable to the influence of *the truth?*" Certainly; otherwise what need would there be to distinguish the *different acceptations* of the term GRACE? Do we not constantly, on every subject, do the same, through the poverty of language? The only remedy is, to observe the connexion, the nature of the subject, causes, effects, and circumstances. Without this, language would be enormously unwieldy. The influence of truth is *grace*, and so is the immediate *influence* of the *Spirit*, and also the effects of that influence, but in a different sense. You again ask, "Is not *a holy state of the mind* a state in which the affections and desires are directed to holy objects?" Granted; but what then? What right has this phrase to claim that meaning *exclusively*, any more than the phrase, *the grace of God*, which all allow has different significations in different connexions? The same remark is applicable to the phrase, *a gracious nature*, and the others which you mention. You say, that by *light* is meant *knowledge;* but is this the only import of the term? Certainly not. Light is a *medium* of knowledge, or perception

of an object, even more properly than the perception itself, though they may in some connexions be used synonymously. Truth is the *thing known*, and by the medium of *light* we come or are enabled to know it. You seem to identify *purity* and *holy affections*, as if there were *no other* import of the term purity used in a spiritual sense. But this is begging the question, and is not true. Were there no *purity* of *nature*, antecedent to holy affections, it is clearly impossible that there should be any holy affections at all. For the operation of truth, whether law or gospel, on an unholy mind, only excites enmity, lust, unbelief, and rebellion. And the *more clearly* truth is displayed, the greater will be the *opposition* to it. The mud at the bottom of the well is stirred up by it.

You seem to imagine that there is some Divine influence, energy, or operation from God upon the soul which does not *dwell* in it as a *new nature*, but is transient and evanescent. But that notion appears to me inconsistent with all just views of theological science, of Scripture testimony, and of Christian experience. The Holy Spirit in the soul, we are assured, is "a well of living water." Our being *able* to behold the glory of the Lord, as it shines in the person and work of Christ, is by "the Spirit of the Lord." You ask, "Is not a *holy state* of the mind, a state in which the affections and desires are directed towards holy objects? and is not this effected by the instrumentality of Divine truth?" Here you identify two things that are very distinct—viz., subjective and reflected grace; and the latter of these you call "a *holy state* of the mind." This is to dispute about *words;* whether affections and desires directed towards holy objects, by means of Divine truth, may not be termed "a holy state of the mind?" You are, undoubtedly, at liberty to denominate the things explained by such terms, though in my view the phrase is not strictly appropriate. But the question returns in full force, Is that the *only* thing which may be so expressed? Is there no holy *state of the mind* PREVIOUS to its being affected by the word? Is there not "a good and honest heart" rendered such by the Holy Spirit, into which the seed of Divine truth is cast? Surely, it is not the *seed* that makes the soil good, nor the *power* with which it is endowed.

The notion I have thought it my duty to oppose is, I firmly believe, unscriptural. It is also fundamentally unphilosophical. It confounds *physics* and *morals;* in other words, it reduces Divine influence to the order of *objective means*, as much so as Divine truth; or else to the mere laws of providential operation. If it be neither of these, nor yet that for which I contend, I am apprehensive it will be found no Divine influence, but a *mystical nothing*. You speak of a "Divine influence which we are all agreed is necessary to spiritual perception." You

will much oblige me by explaining the *nature* and *manner* of such influence as you suppose to be necessary *with the word*, in order to render it effectual. To what may it be compared? How may it be illustrated? Is there anything like it, or that bears any analogy to it, without identifying morals and mechanics? When wind or water turns a mill, there is a Divine energy giving force to the laws of matter and motion. But surely this can never be that operation of the Holy Spirit with the word of which the Sacred Scripture speaks. To recur to the nature of the *soul*, and of the *objects* to which it is made to attach itself, contributes nothing towards solving the difficulty.

Scripture and experience abundantly prove that no *objective* clearness of truth, of teaching, of miracles,—no impressive or forcible representations of God, of Christ, or of heavenly or infernal realities, connected with the *common laws* of Divine energy, as in physical nature, produce a good moral effect. The clearer and plainer the representation of Divine truth, the more is the enmity of the natural man roused. Thus, the brighter the Sun of righteousness shines in the word, the more is the *natural* perception *offended*. The history of Christ and His apostles fully proves this. Were it not for "subjective grace," as before explained, every soul of man would hate and oppose both law and gospel; and the opposition would be in proportion to the *plainness* of the discovery *objectively* made. Were the *influence*, on the contrary, only *in the objective truth* of the gospel, a good preacher might calculate upon the *same effects* upon all his adult audience, with a kind of certainty equal to that which a good engineer expects from a well-constructed machine.

I repeat the inquiry, and I hope you will indulge me with an answer, *What is* that Divine influence which is supposed to accompany the word, if different from what I have stated? But—

III. You wish to know how, according to my principles, "the work of *sanctification* can be ascribed to the Spirit of God?" To you, no doubt, there has appeared some difficulty; but to me it is so evident, that I cannot conceive how possibly the work of sanctification can be ascribed to the Spirit of God on *any other principle*, without identifying His operations in that work with the Divine energy in the laws of nature. However, to prevent mistakes, if possible, we should settle what we mean by "the work of sanctification." By sanctification, I understand *being made holy*. But "holy" again is applicable to different things. Besides the mere relative sense of the word, as when we say the "Holy Land," &c., we say a "holy nature," "holy desires," "holy designs," and "holy *affections*." The nature, designs, and operations of God are *holy;* and so are those of angels. They were never otherwise; but our nature is depraved and unholy, and entirely so, before a

heavenly birth, and consequently all our desires, designs, and affections. Holy *affections* are generated by contemplations of Divine realities; holy designs are formed by a just discrimination of *ends* and *means;* and a holy *nature* is generated by the Holy Spirit operating directly and immediately in the way of a new creation, a new life, or a new birth. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." By a *perception* and approbation of revealed *truth*, a saving *revolution* in the soul takes place, as to *knowledge, faith, love, hope*, &c., which may be called "the new man" in Christ Jesus. This change, in a more lax acceptation, may be termed "a new birth." Thus Christians are "begotten again by the word of truth," &c. But to suppose that the word of truth, or these holy exercises, or both, really produce a holy *nature* cannot be true. It is subversive of all rational ideas to make the *operations* of the soul to change its *nature*. If the nature of the tree be not good, the fruit cannot possibly *make* it good. If the *nature* of the soul be the subject of supernatural and immediate Divine influence, its faith, and love, and hope, and joy, by means of Divine *truth*, (without any supposed supernatural concurrence of Divine influence *in* or incorporated *with* the word,) *will be holy.*

If by sanctification we mean a growing conformity to Christ in holy *exercises of mind*, the office of Divine influence is to maintain and strengthen our *spiritual nature*, from whence those exercises proceed, and without which no such effects would follow, however excellent or glorious might be the objective means. The success of these last depends upon the *use* we make of them; and that which *insures* the profitable use of means is Divine influence *in* the soul. But how is it possible for *truth* (without subjective influence) to *insure* the profitable *use* of truth? And to suppose the *power* of sanctifying is *in* the word, as something superadded to, or blended with it, as weight *with* or *in* a body, does not mend the matter. For the soul would still want a *new nature*, by which it is enabled to perceive, approve, believe, love, and, in a word, rightly to *use* the revealed truth. As the stream does not alter the nature of its *fountain;* so the exercises of the *soul* upon the word of truth, or any sanctification which arises thence, do not, nor possibly can in the nature of things, alter the *nature* of the soul, or produce the *principle* of holy acts.

The system I oppose, instead of *simplifying* the Divine economy, involves it, I conceive, in the most dangerous kind of mysticism. The *words* "Divine influence" are admitted; but the *thing* is denied as to any conceivable *use*. For of what use can "Divine influence" be in sanctification, according to that system? A *renewed nature* will, according to the fixed laws of mental operations, receive, approve, and rejoice in the truth. And an *unrenewed nature* will eternally remain so, if

Divine influence be nothing more than objective, *in* or *with* the word. We may as well expect to "gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles." Divine agency operating *in* or *with* "second causes" produces effects *uniformly*. A mechanical power raises *weight* irrespective of the nature of the subject, whether hay or wood, stone or lead. The wind drives a ship without respect to the nature of the sail, whether hemp or silk. But we know that Divine influence, in its manner of operating in "second causes," produces effects in no such proportion on the minds of men, as constant fact proves. A number of human souls listen to the truths of the gospel; but all are not influenced alike,—to some the same things, the same precious doctrines, are foolishness, and "a savour of death unto death." But if Divine truth and influence operated on the soul in the manner of "second causes" *exclusively*, that is without "subjective grace," this could not take place; the effects, conversion and sanctification, would be seen either in all alike, or in none: except we resolve all cases into mere physical associations!

If it be said the effect is produced when the truth is *believed;* very true, let there be but the *spirit of faith* in exercise, and the difference is accounted for. But *all* the difficulty of accounting for the soul's *possessing* that spirit or principle of faith remains untouched on the system I oppose. To expect the *principle* or spirit of faith, by which we are enabled to believe the truth, from the truth itself accompanied with Divine influence as operating in physical "second causes," would be no less absurd than for a *blind* man to expect distinct vision from *light*, or a *deaf* person to expect pleasure from musical *sounds*.

Yet we consistently maintain that the *inability* of the carnal mind to receive the things of the Spirit of God is a *criminal* inability, because the mind is wilfully and resolutely attached to *other things* which are *incompatible* with Divine truth. A belief of falsehood excludes the belief of the truth, and the love of the world excludes the love of the Father. The gospel is the grand *test* to try of *what nature* the soul is, whether good or bad, carnal or spiritual. It is also the great *instrument*, divinely appointed, as a *moral mean*, to awaken, convince, convert, and sanctify the soul. The *rationale* of this deserves to be noticed. The rational soul in its free agency being determined by *motives*, (understanding by this term that which eventually *moves* the soul to *actual* determination;) and such motives consisting of *objective considerations*, (which is the proper notion of *moral means*,) together with the *nature* of the soul as carnal or spiritual; it is plain, that neither conversion nor sanctification could possibly take place (as exercises of the mind) without the instituted *means*. For though the Spirit of God needs not the instrumentality of the word for infusing life into the soul, whereby it is enabled to *receive* the truth in the love thereof, its

instrumentality is indispensably necessary *for us*, in order that we may *believe and love it*. For *faith*, or *believing*, cometh by hearing the word of God. And the same is true of every *exercised* or *reflected* grace.

You suppose I "deny that men are born again of the gospel." But this is by no means the fact. On the contrary, I believe, and have endeavoured uniformly to maintain, that the *new man* in Christ Jesus, consisting of knowledge, faith, love, fear, delight in God, &c., is "born again of the gospel." Nor does it appear to me possible for a man, in *that sense*, (according to several passages of Scripture,) to be born again otherwise than by the word of truth. But this is a very different thing from that *new nature* which renders the word *effectual*, in order to produce that new birth, and to promote sanctification. When the apostle says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us," what less can be intended than this, that the Holy Spirit given unto us *in the heart*, or soul, is the *cause* why we perceive and enjoy the love of God towards us in the gospel, and exercise love towards Him in return? The same is true respecting every part and degree of sanctification. The Holy Spirit *in the soul* is the subjective *cause*, but the word of truth *alone* is the *objective means*. But Divine concurrence, as in "second causes," is not *peculiar* to the operation of *truth* any more than of *error*. Without such Divine concurrence, according to the laws of our nature, we could not even believe a falsehood; which shews how improper it is to identify it with the Scripture meaning of Divine influence.

Have you ever examined Dr Reid's notions on the "active powers of man" in connexion with the doctrine of Pelagius? It appears to me that the radical *sentiments* are precisely the same, and that the subordinate difference is only this: the subtle *Briton* clothed them with scriptural phrases, and the learned *Scotchman* with a modern philosophic garb. It is wonderful that his notions have not been exposed as highly injurious to the interests of genuine Christianity, as well as utterly incompatible with the genuine principles of moral science. He was an acute observer of *facts* and of *mental operations;* but he erroneously inferred that scientific deductions could be made from them, like a system of physics from experiments and phenomena. In the latter case, the mode of philosophising is just; but in moral science no one can fairly deduce a theorem of *what* OUGHT *to be* from an accurate observance of the human powers and operations. To *be* and *ought to be* are considerations essentially different; *natural philosophy* is founded on the *former*, but *moral science* on the *latter* of these. Hence Reid's works on the *intellectual* powers of man, coinciding with the philosophy of nature, is a chain of good reasoning, generally speaking; but those

on the *active* powers, *pursued in the same way*, are a weak string of *conjectures*, instead of adamantine links.

Had I time I would endeavour to transcribe the preceding pages, and render them less unworthy of your serious and close consideration. If any expression has escaped me which has a tendency to offend, do not impute it to want of Christian affection; and believe me, dear Sir, your sincere friend and brother, E. WILLIAMS.

ROTHERHAM, *Oct.* 16, 1809.

END OF VOL. I.